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THE BALANCE

WILLIAM DANA ORCUTT



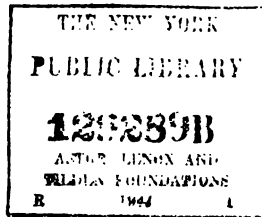
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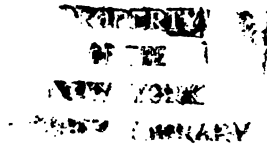
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THE BALANCE



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To My Sons
REGINALD WILSON ORCUTT
PHILIP DANA ORCUTT
IN PRIDE AND CONFIDENCE



THE BALANCE

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PEOPLE OF THE STORY

IN THE ORDER OF THEIR APPEARANCE

LOLA STEWART, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Stewart, returned from war work in France.

RICHARD NORTON, son of James Norton, a veteran of the World War.

OLGA MIROVICH, a worker in the factory.

JAMES NORTON, the head of the Norton Manufacturing Company.

HENRY CROSS the leading citizen of Norcross before the coming of the Norton Manufacturing Company.

MARTHA CROSS, his wife.

SARAH CROSS, his sister.

BARRY O'CAROLAN, a one-legged ex-service man. Protégé of Lola's.

WILLIAM STEWART, a wealthy resident of Norcross, and a director in the Norton Manufacturing Company.

MRS. WILLIAM STEWART, his wife.

WILLIAM TREADWAY, James Norton's private secretary.

HANNAH, an elderly dependent in the Norton household.

TONY LEMHOLTZ, a worker in the factory and radical labor leader.

JOHN SIBLEY, a worker in the factory and veteran of the World War.

ALEC STERLING, the superintendent of the Norton Manufacturing Company.

DR. ALLEN THURBER, an adopted citizen of Norcross.

PLACE: Norcross, a Massachusetts manufacturing town.

PERIOD: July, 1920 — March, 1921.

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CHAPTER I

I

OH, DICK, it has been lonesome waiting for you!" Richard Norton and Lola Stewart were together in the Italian pergola in the garden, whose luxurious bloom added beauty even as its formality gave dignity to the famous Stewart estate in Norcross. Below them were masses of Oriental larkspur, the tall, closely-set spikes rising majestically above the graceful foliage in its full July splendor. Nearby were heavy clusters of Madonna lilies, the purity of their whiteness contrasting sharply with the varying shades of blue in the neighboring larkspur.

Three years before, had Lola spoken these words, Richard would have had her in his arms, covering her lips with kisses. Today he felt instinctively that such an act would be taking unwarranted liberty. Yet she was the same Lola and he the same Richard! The youthful impulsiveness of those earlier days had disappeared, and each now felt a sense of repression as inexplicable as it was uncomfortable. She was changed,

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the first July profusion Lola and Richard had enjoyed together since their greatest and most momentous circle had been completed, and they had returned to the same point whence they had set out. Life, after all, is but a succession of such circles.

"How wonderful to be here again!" the traveler exclaims, believing that his pleasure comes from revisiting familiar scenes or greeting again familiar faces. It is all part of the sheer joy of completing another circle! Day by day old circles become memories and new ones begin, until that time comes when each of us awaits in contemplation the completion of the last and greatest of them all.

Richard's circle had carried him through the inferno of the Marne-Aisne offensive and the St. Mihiel attack, being temporarily broken by a period in the Base Hospital at Toul as a result of a bullet through his lung, but continued when he was assigned to the Army of Occupation and stationed at Coblenz for months after the armistice had ended actual hostilities. Lola's circle had been smaller, but its curve also crossed the seas, and before completing its arc it merged her individuality into the composite Red Cross nurse in hospital service. Thus, for a time, the symbolic veil concealed the mass of wonderful chestnut hair that was her birthright; and the uniform, sacred in the eyes of every soldier, during this same period robbed a charming personality of its identity.

July was a month of memories for the pergola. Here Richard had told Lola that he was among those fortunate enough to be ordered overseas, and this message

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brought to them a realization that they were no longer merely friends but lovers. Here, protected from curious eyes by the twining honeysuckle, their lips first met, sealing the confession which was to merge their lives in one. The following July found the pergola deserted, with the honeysuckle in luxurious but riotous disorder; for Richard was in action at St. Mihiel and Lola on duty at her hospital. Again the July flowers bloomed, but their fragrance meant little to Lola, now turned by war experience from girlhood into comprehending womanhood, sitting there alone, longing with anticipation mingled with apprehension for her lover's return.

Now they were together again. She had been home over a year and he for six months. They had compared their experiences, regretting that at some point over there the circles had not touched. They had tried to forget what they had seen and to become again a part of the life they had lived before, which on its surface appeared to be going on as if the war had been only a hideous nightmare. The pure white lilies in the garden were not stained with blood as had been the lilies in France! The larkspur reflected the colors of the cerulescent sky unclouded by smoke from bursting shells. But the lilies and the larkspur had their own circles to complete, and fulfilled their function when by their beauty they served to take one's thoughts away from the horrors of battle. Yet neither the lilies nor the larkspur would have asked us to forget that the horrors had been. What of the people in the streets and in the counting-houses and in the homes, untouched

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by the toll of war? Had they the right to forget so soon?

III

"The garden hasn't changed a bit," Richard continued, as they looked down over the riot of gorgeous color. "I used to wonder if I should ever again see it in its prime."

With an effort Lola threw off the mood which had sobered her, and turned to him with a smile so forced that he felt the effort it cost her. Her face was far too mature for a girl of her age, and this phase was accentuated by her present attitude. The color he remembered in her cheeks when he kissed her good-bye so long ago had vanished. The light which shone through the tears glistening in her eyes as she bravely wished him a safe return had disappeared. With a spirit like hers Richard had not been surprised when he heard that she had joined the ministering army, but even with his knowledge of what she endured he had never imagined that so great a change could be wrought.

He recognized how much had come to her in compensation. The quiet maturity which replaced the girlish enthusiasm gave character to her face and poise to her bearing which in itself was beautiful; her all-embracing sense of responsibility expressed a self-effacement and an unselfishness which made her presence inspiring and ineffably sweet. Yet the changes, whatever they were, produced an invisible barrier incapable of analysis, which had not before existed.

"I never meant to let you catch me in one of my

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doldrum moods," the girl declared as she regained control of herself. "It is so wonderful to be together again, to be able to think of ourselves without feeling that we are neglecting any one!"

IV

He did not reply at once, for the conversation carried him back to a period he would have liked to forget. God! how glad he was to be home again! The fighting days at least had given opportunity for action, but those months of *ennui* at Coblenz! Except for the enforced gaities, he and the others would have gone mad! Anything to banish all thought save of the present. The past was filled with awful memories of trenches and shells, of dead and dying comrades and foes, of hardships and privations; the future was almost as terrifying with its uncertainties and its dreaded problems, still unsettled, perhaps impossible to settle. But the present remained, . . . a present beyond their control, ordained by a power beyond their reach; a waiting present, to be endured. And to make it endurable, the past and future, home and its conventional requirements, for the time had to be absolutely forgotten.

Richard finally turned to Lola, ashamed of his momentary obsession, and laughed consciously.

"How impossible it is to keep from talking about it!" he exclaimed; "yet every time I do I swear I'll never mention it again."

"Whenever I start out trying to be cheerful, it always ends this way," Lola admitted consciously.

"You still feel it, just as I do."

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"I can't shake it off," she declared. "I find myself out of sympathy with everything and everybody. I try . . . I do try . . . to forget and to settle back into the old routine, but I simply can't do it."

Richard pressed her hand sympathetically.

"I understand," he said simply. "I am drifting just as you are. There's no use trying to deceive you. Everything is altered. Father is different, the men in the factory . . . the people we meet socially are different. The whole world is different."

His intensity caused Lola for the moment to forget her own introspection. She placed her hand on Richard's arm.

"I wonder if the change is in the whole world or just in ourselves?"

"What difference does it make?" Richard demanded with a return of the bitterness in his voice. "All the idealism I thought I had in France has been knocked out of me since I came home. Now I've lost faith in everything."

"Oh, Dick," Lola cried, "don't say that! It is because of that idealism that things seem out of sorts to you."

"I know; but if I'm going to keep myself from going stark, staring mad I must forget it and be like other people. I can't change them."

"Think what you and I gained which they don't even know exists," she urged. "I couldn't give that up, nor could you."

"It all seemed fine enough over there," Richard admitted. "While I was lying flat on my back those

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weeks at Toul I had everything worked out. I called it my 'vision.' I kept asking myself what it was all for, and I had the greatest pipe-dream you ever knew. Then I came home and found . . . this."

"You never told me that, Dick. I have been worried to see you so restless and unhappy, but I have no fears if you have really had a vision. Tell me what it was."

"It would seem ridiculous now, but then I believed it was based on something. I'm trying to forget it. Better let it die a natural death and bury it."

"No, no, Dick; tell it to me. I am just as unhappy as you, but the knowledge I gained that there is something greater and more beautiful than anything I ever knew before has helped me to carry on. You and I have a message to the others which we have not yet delivered."

"You have kept up your war work, Lola. You don't have to push into the background that which brings out the best there is in you." He pointed to the figure of a man working in one of the flower beds. "Barry O'Carolan is a daily reminder of something you have really accomplished. It is different with me. In France I was treated as a man whose ideas were at least worth listening to. I had men under me. I gave orders, and could keep my self-respect. Here I have nothing but my work at the plant, and I don't fit in there any more. With the other men, I am simply an automaton, forbidden to think, whose loyalty is measured by my willingness to merge my individuality in the mass and to accept blindly the dictation of another. I tell you,

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it is maddening. Think of it, factory work after three years in the open!"

"You are not alone, Dick. There are hundreds of the workmen who feel it just as much."

"That's what keeps me upset. If I were the only one I could cut and run, but there are boys in those shops who are simply eating their hearts out when they were perfectly satisfied before. At first I thought I could help them, but I can't make my father or any of these stay-at-homes understand even my language. They think the men are chesty because they have been in the army. It isn't that, . . . their experience has developed them and given them a new dignity. They are entitled to respect. Work as work isn't beneath them, but some of the jobs are, even though they weren't before. The men don't want anything given them, but they do want a chance to use the new asset they have gained."

"You mustn't give up," Lola insisted. "You are the only one who can ever hope to make your father and the Directors like daddy understand. You owe it to these men, Dick, and when you have put it over for them you will make real that vision of yours, . . . please tell me what it was."

"Little chance," Richard protested doggedly; "but the fact that I am still here shows you that I haven't quit yet."

"It has been such a change for the men since they returned to civilian dress," Lola continued, . . . "such a contrast in the way they have been treated since they were welcomed home as conquering heroes; for with

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the taking off of the uniforms the people seem to feel that as the war is over it should be forgotten."

"For the people," Richard interrupted bitterly, "the war was simply a seven-day wonder; but for the men . . ."

"I have always dreaded this time," Lola persisted. "In my hospital there was a wonderful little French captain. He was useless for further military service because of his wounds, so they assigned him to our staff as helper. One sleeve was empty and one leg was wood, like Barry's, but he used to hobble around the hospital humming the 'Marseillaise,' greeting every one with a smile, and radiant in the proud possession of a brilliant row of medals fastened on his breast. Every one called him 'the spirit of France.' I wonder where he is now, and whether he is still smiling, and if people are still as considerate of him. If he has had to take off his uniform and put aside his medals what is there left, Dick? Nothing but his helpless, butchered body. I do hope that the people around him haven't forgotten what it represents."

"At any rate, his government is taking better care of him than we have taken of our cripples," Richard blurted out.

"Ah," sighed Lola, "that would not satisfy him. He lived upon the admiration which he saw day after day in the eyes of every one around him. He isn't big enough, Dick, to see beyond, so once his beribboned uniform is taken off his glory vanishes with it . . . Come, Dick, tell me of your vision."

Richard did not respond at once. The crystalization

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of his weeks of introspection had meant so much to him that in the reaction he had suffered more than he was willing to admit to any one. But Lola at least understood. She, of all the people he knew, would sympathize with it even though the possibility of its realization had long since departed.

"You remember," he said at last, "how we felt when the United States finally entered the war? We were intoxicated with emotional hysteria, and I went overseas with 'France and Lafayette' as my slogan, and a conviction that I was a member of a mighty crusade. Everything was all right until that bullet struck me. Until then I was an asset to my country and to France; then I became a liability. Lying there on that cot I had a chance to think, and I tell you I thought hard. Instead of being a mighty crusader, I realized that I was only an infinitesimal atom, a cog in that great war machine which rolled backwards and forwards as the tide of battle turned, leaving behind its toll of broken men, of which I was one."

Lola listened to him attentively, but her face assumed the pallor of the Madonna lilies. His words recalled the scenes she had tried hard to forget, his intensity gave them startling vividness.

"When I found that this made me rebellious," Richard continued, "I began to question my real motives. Had I come to fight for France, as I really thought, or was it the adventure that appealed to me, and was my whole relation to the war a selfish one after all?"

"But you had risked your life, Dick."

"Wasn't it all part of the emotional hysteria and of

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the adventure?" he asked; "but I kept on thinking. Then I began to be afraid that by staying so long in the hospital I should be no good for fighting again. The only thing that kept us going, you know, was the feeling that it was all a great game, with lives instead of goal-posts for counters. Unless we felt that way we couldn't have gone through with it; it was too ghastly. Night after night I woke up covered with sweat, seeing things stripped of their masks in their hideous reality."

Lola placed her hand gently over his. In his suffering she forgot her own, and her sympathy helped him.

"I am so glad you are telling me this," she said quietly. "It will do you good to share it with some one . . . All this was before your vision came to you?"

"Yes. I came out of this phase and passed into the third stage. That was when I asked myself what it was all for. Here were thousands of wounded men throughout France lying on cots like mine. There must be something beyond adventure which had attracted them and had given them the impulse to risk their lives . . . Then I thought I had found the answer."

He turned away from the girl to hide the bitterness in his face.

"It seems so foolish to talk about it now after what you and I have seen since we came home," he added.

"Please tell me," Lola begged. "I really want to know."

"All right. I know you won't laugh at me. Here it is as well as I can tell you: At that moment the

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war meant to me a release from something which before this had kept me bound. What we were fighting for seemed so big that small things, our lives for instance, assumed their proper relative positions. Death, the greatest event in life, had always before seemed useless; now we had the privilege of meeting it in a manner equal to its greatness. Before that I had been haunted by a fear of what the future might do for me, and this, of course, placed a hopeless limitation upon my life. At that moment I was freed from any fear of what could happen, for the only thing which counted was the big common cause. I had been on the outside of the world, and at last I became a part of it."

The man paused as if ashamed to have put his thoughts into words. Lola looked at him admiringly.

"Oh, Dick!" she cried, "don't tell me that it is possible to have had such a vision as that and then slip back."

"It is possible, Lola," he answered, with a note so positive in his voice that the girl was shocked; "it not only is possible, but that very thing has happened. I wish we might agree right now never to speak of the war again."

"Do you think we could keep any such agreement?" Lola inquired, struggling to recover from her disappointment.

"Probably not," he admitted, "but I would much rather talk about ourselves."

He looked into her face with an appeal she could not escape.

"Lola," he asked, "when are we going to be married?"

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The change of the subject was so abrupt that she started noticeably.

"It seems sacrilegious to think of ourselves, Dick, after what you have just been saying. Somehow I can't seem to think of marriage . . . now . . ."

"I know you can't, and I wonder if you ever will. Since I came home everything I really want seems to be slipping farther and farther away from me. There's a hopelessness about it that keeps me unsettled and apprehensive. You and I have had the same problems, Lola. We haven't been successful in solving them by ourselves, but if we were married . . ."

"Don't urge me against my better judgment, dear," she pleaded with him. "I don't understand myself. I know that my love for you is deeper, if anything, than when you went away, yet I don't dare trust myself to make you happy until I find out what this change in me really means. Be patient, dear, and everything will come out all right. Some day we will look back at this uncertainty and laugh at our fears."

Richard was distinctly annoyed by her continued postponement, and, man-like, made no attempt to conceal it. He rose abruptly and picked up his hat from the stone table beside them.

"All right," he said with a show of resignation. "I can't force you to marry me, but you must not wonder that I've lost faith in everything. The boys who died over there still believing that their sacrifice accomplished something, are to be envied rather than mourned. They have been spared the awakening that has come to me."

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Lola was distressed to see him so wounded, yet she must be true to herself. Her eyes moistened as she looked at him with infinite tenderness, almost motherly in its understanding.

"Don't be hurt, Dick," she pleaded. "We have assumed responsibilities whether we want them or not. You expressed it perfectly when you said that before we were on the outside of the world, and now we have become a part of it. Our happiness can only come if we live up to these new responsibilities."

Richard's disappointment was too real for him to yield his ill-temper, and he turned away with a deprecating shrug of his shoulders.

CHAPTER II

I

LOLA watched the unrelenting back, eloquent in its expression of disapproval, as Richard strode away from her. Their conversation left her in a curious state of mind. If the subject of marriage had not been mentioned, she could have retained, for a time at least, the exhilaration she had experienced; as it was, Dick's inability to hold himself consistent to his own convictions made her happiness premature, and she suffered from the reaction.

Richard had put into words ideas which with her had before been merely fugitive thoughts, and to have some one crystallize them was in itself a real inspiration. He admitted that through his experiences he had gained an ability to force events in his life to assume their proper relative positions, yet when she shrank from assuming responsibilities for which she believed them both to be at present unprepared, he was hurt and offended. If Richard had looked upon the war as offering the privilege of meeting death in a manner equal to its greatness, by the same token he should look upon war's aftermath as giving one the opportunity to meet marriage in the same spirit.

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Marriage to the average woman meant a home and the companionship of husband and children. Lola could not bring herself to consider this as the highest expression of herself. It was a part of that expression, but not the whole of it. "I had been on the outside of the world, and at last I became a part of it," Richard had said. He felt it, just as she did, he was able to translate that feeling into words, but he was not translating it into action. If they married now, she was convinced that he would never attain the heights which his vision flashed before him. His home and his family would give him relief from his restlessness and from the present unsettled nature of his living, and he and she would settle down into the same self-centered, humdrum existence that thousands and hundreds of thousands of families are living today. If this were possible, with the newly-created conditions crying for intelligent, unselfish, sacrificing service, then the agony and bloodshed of those awful years would count for nothing. Richard admitted that his vision was now but a memory of disappointed ideals, and that he had given up all hope of compelling its realization. That must not . . . should not be. For his own sake and for hers she must insist that he live up to it, and in so doing make it possible that their union, freed from fear of what the future might do for them, might also be freed from all limitations, and devoted to the great common cause.

II

When Richard left Lola he took a short cut through an opening in the brick wall which surrounded the

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garden, across an unreclaimed field onto the road. He had no definite objective, his one conscious thought being that he was out of sorts with Lola for her continued postponement of their wedding. Being out of sorts had come to be a habit with him. His work at the factory was distasteful, his home life associated itself with daily wrangles with his father, and now he had reached a point where he began to question Lola's devotion, and Lola since his return had been his one haven of refuge. She had changed, . . . that was obvious. Was it possible that the new Lola had lost, to a degree at least, her former love for him? Picking up a stick, he viciously hacked off the heads of the unoffending daisies which showed on either side of the walk, meekly bowing their heads to his unwarranted reprisals.

Suddenly he became conscious of some one behind him and turned.

"Hello, Olga!" he exclaimed, glad to have his mood interrupted, and waiting for the girl to overtake him.

"What strides you take!" she cried, out of breath as she stood beside him; "I thought I should never catch you."

"Where were you?"

"Waiting in front of Mr. Stewart's house. I expected you to come out that way."

"Waiting for what?"

"For you," she replied archly, looking up at him out of her big, brown eyes as if ready for reproof, . . . "for you," she repeated, "Mr. Richard Norton."

Richard laughed at her defiant manner quite as much

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as at her words. She made a picture as she stood there with militant attitude, in her pink gingham frock, which set off her dark skin and flashing eyes. Olga Mirovich would attract attention anywhere. Her lithe body ever seemed too small to contain a spirit so fearless and dominating, her eyes spoke even more forcefully than her lips, and her face registered her emotions with the rapidity and accuracy of a photographic plate.

"Why should you be waiting for me?" Richard asked.

"Why shouldn't I?"

"I'll say why shouldn't you?" Richard acquiesced, laughing again.

The girl's face lighted and she placed her hand hesitatingly on his arm.

"That is what I told Tony, but he laughed at me."

"Tony Lemholtz?" Richard asked. "Why should he laugh at you?"

"The son of the great James Norton will not stoop to speak with a factory-girl," he said. "But he speaks to me every day in the shop," I answered, and I tossed my head . . . like this. Then Tony laughed. "Perhaps in the shop," he said; "but it is different outside."

"Tony doesn't know me as well as you do, does he, Olga? . . . Come, we will walk along together and you will tell me why you waited for me."

III

They walked on, but in silence. Richard looked at his companion occasionally, and saw that she was hesitating for just the right words to convey her message. Olga was a character at the plant. Ambitious, alert,

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active, better educated than her companions, she was the best operative in her department, and recognized by the other women in the works as their leader and spokesman. Richard had first noticed her one day when she attacked another girl who taunted her with being a Russian. The workmen laughingly separated them, and while the two assailants were held far enough apart to prevent bodily injury the girl poured out the vials of her wrath upon her tormentor.

"Don't you dare say that, Katie McGuire!" she cried passionately with flaming eyes. "I *was* a Russian. My father and mother *were* Russians, but became Americans. Who could remain a Russian who had seen her grandmother crippled for life by blows from the knout . . . whose grandfather died from exhaustion in the mines of Siberia, whose murdered relatives shed a long trail of blood straight to the palace gate of the White Czar! I am not a Russian, Katie McGuire! My father and mother and I escaped and came to this country. When our ship entered the great harbor of New York my father pointed to the statue where Liberty holds up her torch, and said to my mother, 'Now at last I am a man . . . you are a human being . . . and we are all Americans.' If you say again I am a Russian, Katie McGuire, I will bite your ear off! I can do it!"

Never had Richard seen such passionate fire as dominated that slight, pulsating figure. She seemed the embodiment of the sublime courage which finally enabled her people to throw off the yoke which centuries of serfdom had locked around their necks, even though they, like Olga, are still children too undeveloped to

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use their new-found freedom wisely. Ever since that day Richard had improved every opportunity to talk with the girl, and encouraged her to tell him of herself.

IV

But it was not the militant Olga who walked beside him in the twilight of this July afternoon. Their steps had taken them to the edge of the lake which to Norcrossians is the most beautiful sheet of water in the world. With certain allowances made for local pride, it is still fair to say that East Lake owes no apology to any similar spot, for the pines and the hemlocks and the cedars group themselves in picturesque beauty around its banks, while, beyond, the heavier growth of timberland rises gently to the Blue Hills. The sun was just disappearing behind the trees as the two seated themselves on a rough wooden bench built upon a slight eminence above the water.

"You haven't told me yet why you waited for me, Olga," Richard reminded her.

The girl started from her reverie.

"It is so wonderful!" she answered irrelevantly, giving herself up without restraint to the sensuous joy of the beauty of her surroundings . . . "But I will tell you, for you are in haste to go home and be rid of little Olga."

"No, no," Richard humored her; smiling at this new mood which he had never seen. "I am in no hurry. This is all very beautiful as you say, and you fit into the picture perfectly . . . You are a beautiful child, Olga, even if your temper is so violent."

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"I am not a child, and my temper is for those I hate," she declared . . . "I will tell you why I waited. It is about the men at the factory. They are planning something, I do not know yet what. They are not sure about you. Are you James Norton's son or are you one of us? I told Tony I would find out, for no one else dared ask you."

"It ought not to take so much courage to ask me, little Olga," Richard answered soberly, unconsciously giving her the epithet she herself had used; "but it will take far more to answer it. The men must know that I am not in sympathy with many of the present methods at the factory. I want them to realize that I am doing and shall do all I can to correct some of the injustices I have seen since I came home from France. To that extent I am one of them. But if they are planning violence I am against them, . . . not only because I am James Norton's son, but also because I am an employee of the Company and I am loyal. If the men will trust me I can help them. You may tell them that. If they don't trust me, tell them I will keep away from their meetings, for I am no spy."

"I trust you," Olga announced simply. "You are the son of a rich man, Mr. Richard Norton, but at heart you are one of us, and I know it."

"There should be no contradiction in that, for the rich man needs the help of the workman just as the workman needs the money of the rich man. Those of us who went to the war, Olga, learned many lessons which we must impart to those who didn't have the same chance to learn them."

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The girl looked up at him admiringly.

"The men will trust you," she assured him confidently. "You fought for us just as you fought for the rich people. If the country which was once my country had not been a traitor you would not have had to fight so hard. I would kill myself from shame if I were still a Russian and not an American."

"You are an American, sure enough, Olga," Richard acknowledged; "no one could doubt that . . . Now shall I take you back to the town? It is getting dark."

"You need take me nowhere, Mr. Richard Norton, unless you want to. Olga can take care of herself . . . But do you not like me a little bit?"

"Of course I like you. Who could help it?"

They were standing now. As she spoke Olga drew nearer to him, playing with the buttons on his coat. Suddenly she raised her head and smiled roguishly as her eyes, shining like twin stars, met his in the dusk. She felt his instinctive movement toward her and then the reaction of his enforced restraint.

"You may if you wish, Mr. Richard Norton," she whispered; "but I am glad you waited, for Olga's lips are not freely given."

"No, no," he exclaimed quickly; "it would not be fair."

"To the lady in Mr. Stewart's garden?" she asked daringly, pouting her pique. "Was it her fairness to you that made you knock the heads off all the poor daisies? If she is fair why does she not marry you?"

Her words irritated Richard.

"She is not sure yet that she . . . loves me," he

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admitted, and then was more annoyed that he had been surprised into this acknowledgment.

"Not sure! Then it is 'no.' There is never doubt in a woman's heart. She loves or she does not love. She does not know why, she does not care why, but she knows that it is or it is not."

"I was not thinking of her, little Olga; it would not be fair to you to kiss you, even though you make it mighty hard to resist."

"Not fair to me! Since when have you had to think of that? I have told you that Olga can take care of herself. You think I love you because I offer my lips? You flatter yourself, Mr. Richard Norton. Do you know what a kiss means to me? It is wine sipped by two friends from the same glass; not vodka, for that is sluggish, but sparkling wine which sets the blood on fire and makes me live for that happy moment in another world, . . . in my friend's world. But if I loved you, . . . ha! You would know it! There would be no doubt as with the lady in Mr. Stewart's garden. I have never yet loved a man, Mr. Richard Norton, but can you not be little Olga's friend?"

Richard turned his hand until her fingers were in his grasp. Instinctively he drew her toward him, and she held her face close to his in tantalizing proximity.

"I have warned you, little Olga," he exclaimed; "but I am human!"

"Because we both are human, and because we are friends, why should we not sip the wine together?"

He felt her body yield as he crushed the slight form in his arms, and Olga gave a little sigh of happiness

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as his lips pressed against hers. When he released her she stood quivering for a moment beside him.

“If you had ever kissed the Stewart lady like that you would be married by now,” she cried mischievously; and in another moment she had fled from him into the twilight.

CHAPTER III

I

NORCROSS is an attractively-located factory-town lying not many miles from Boston at the foot of the Blue Hills, and it draws its life from the great plant of the Norton Manufacturing Company. Not that its population is limited to those who gain their livelihood from this prosperous corporation, for the proximity of Norcross to a great city and its own physical attractions have proved a magnet to other householders who seek natural beauty, fresh air, and an opportunity for expansion in establishing their homes. Still, it is a fair statement that without the physical presence of the great plant the town would still be enjoying the Rip Van Winkle sleep which is the fate of other New England towns untouched as yet by commerce.

Even the business section of the town has not destroyed the beauties which Nature allotted to it with lavish hand. Either by uncanny foresight or fortunate coincidence the early builders of the town planted the rows of elms and oaks straight and well separated, so that the new macadam streets trespassed only upon the broad grass borders of the walks. Now these trees intertwine their foliage, partially concealing the stone

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business blocks, and form fascinating vistas, to which even the adopted citizens point with pride. Outside the centre of the town the broad State roads, well maintained, run to the south toward the Blue Hills, the houses on either side being unpretentious but expressive of their orderly, self-respecting owners. To the north, the roads run to the great New England metropolis, and over these arteries one sees a constant stream of motor-trucks and other vehicles conveying produce and production from Norcross to its markets.

The people of Norcross divide themselves into two distinct groups, even as did those of ancient Greece, and they possess many of the same characteristics. Those who would have been Dorians in Athens are the elderly people who still cling loyally to the ancestral customs and the traditions associated with their beloved homesteads. Abandoned by their progeny, which seeks its fortune in the more exciting atmosphere of the cities, the Norcrossian-Dorians, recognizing the hopelessness of opposing modern innovations, gratify their self-respect by accepting new conditions under chronic protest. The Ionic portion of Norcross are the doers, and they, true to their classification, have brought to the town undoubted creative activity which, combined with the expression of their love of arts and letters, gives to it an air of refinement often lacking in more pretentious communities.

II

When, years ago, Norcross received its present baptismal name, James Norton, founder of the Norton

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Manufacturing Company and still its autocratic master, confidently expected to have his own family cognomen perpetuated in the lexicon of Massachusetts proper names; but a rival appeared in the person of one Henry Cross, the titular head of a family which had inhabited the town since the Indian wigwam gave way to the Colonial style of architecture. The coming of the great industry to the town had been a heart-breaking blow to the Cross family, which was essentially Doric in birth and inclinations. Until then Henry Cross had been the undisputed squire of the simple, well-mannered New England village, and his women-folk basked in his reflected glory. No family possessed so many broad acres, carefully tilled and productively cultivated. The Cross "mansion" was the finest in the village, filled as it was with rarest Colonial furniture inherited from earlier generations, and decorated with family portraits and New England samplers which successively and chronologically marked the feminine progression of the Cross dynasty.

The coming of the Norton Manufacturing Company not only threatened the supremacy of Henry Cross but promptly eclipsed it. The Norton workmen required homes, and the neighbors of the Cross family sold their farms piece-meal for building-lots at prices which to them made the advent of the new industry a fortuitous act of God; but the Cross acres remained intact, and "No Trespass" signs appeared at every corner. In a single decade the sleepy little farming settlement was metamorphosed into a thriving New England manufacturing town, and James Norton was its

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leading citizen. His stone house made the Cross mansion appear insignificant, and was rivaled only by a similar estate developed by William Stewart, Lola's father, who next to Norton was the largest stockholder in the Company. New and modern schools sprang up, the Congregational church now had denominational rivals; a bank was established, with James Norton as its president. The change in the old village was complete, and even Henry Cross realized that former conditions had passed never to return.

Yet this realization could not kill the resentment nor the antagonism which had smouldered during these eventful years, and when James Norton undertook to substitute his own name for the long-respected but non-committal "Eastham," Henry Cross rose in town meeting and in his wrath to express his ideas in no uncertain phrases. The renaming of the town was the chief topic of conversation for weeks, and the Dorian faction of the townspeople, even though begrudgingly admitting the advantages accruing from Mr. Norton's many activities, ranged themselves against him as an expression of individual rights. The compromise is shown in the name finally adopted. Henry Cross claimed to have won the victory because in "Norcross" the whole of his name was embodied and only a fragment of his rival's, while James Norton retorted that a fragment of his name more than offset the whole of Henry Cross's, and even at that the fragment was given precedence.

With a name which so well combined the Doric and Ionic styles of architecture, the town again settled down

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to its business of growing. The plant grew, requiring more dwellings for its workmen; the families grew, requiring more schools and churches. The farms gradually disappeared, making way for new intersecting streets, new homes, and new public buildings. Norcross had more than reached adolescence before the war came, but with this epoch-making event the town at once blossomed into full maturity. The Norton Manufacturing Company became a war industry, working three eight-hour shifts; and not even Henry Cross would have had the temerity to dispute the universal local conviction that so long as the town of Norcross stood, the Kaiser and his hordes would wage a hopeless strife in their efforts to uproot civilization.

III

If James Norton had been an autocrat before, the war made of him a Czar. To have the orders exceed the capacity of his factory, to find a patriotic response in his men to the demand to rise to every emergency, to have the authority to drive ceaselessly for greater output, represented to him the apotheosis of human satisfaction. Stern, upright, demanding much but never more than he believed himself willing to give under similar circumstances, he represented the old school of industrial leaders who force production by "putting the fear of God" into their workmen.

"You tell the men from me," was his favorite message sent through the superintendent or foremen, "that as long as they play fair with me I'll play fair with them, but" . . . and he would bring his fist down hard on

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his mahogany desk . . . "tell them to get this, that I'm the boss 'round here and what I say goes. I'll do the thinking for the lot of 'em, and they'll do the work."

Norton really believed that he always played fair with his men, and when they rebelled he was sincere in regarding them as ungrateful and disloyal.

"Loyalty," he would say, "means the willingness of a workman to come through with a full day's work for a full day's pay, and to work harder than that when the welfare of his concern demands it. When he isn't loyal like that he's biting the hand that feeds him, and God a'mighty hates a snake!"

There were rumblings throughout the plant before the war which annoyed but did not disturb Norton, and when these disappeared in the patriotic fervor which swept through every stratum in every community he was completely deceived. He honestly believed that at last the workmen in his factory not only recognized their obligation to capital, but that in so doing they served their own best interests. Never was he so tireless in his own personal efforts; never so demanding of his men; never so successful in accomplishing the maximum translated into terms of production. As an added happiness, his son had at last done something which pleased him, . . . his own son, Richard, had been among the first to throw down his tools and enlist to fight for America's ideals. Henry Cross had no son to send, so Norton felt that he had scored again on his vituperative adversary.

The military experience Richard would get would surely make a man of him. Not that James Norton

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had any special complaint to make of his son's conduct before the war, except that he was the only one who ever dared to differ with him. This, Norton contended, was simply an expression of youth and inexperience. To cure him of both these diseases Richard had been put at work in overalls with the men, and it had been Norton's intention to keep him there until he "grew up," . . . which was another way of saying, "until he learns to agree with his father." Then Fate stepped in and took Richard from his job, transferred him over-seas, and placed him under the tyrant War, . . . the sternest master in the world. When Richard returned, Norton confidently assured himself, the boy would have learned his lesson, and the necessity of further labor in the shops might be removed. In James Norton's heart was an unspoken yearning to have his son shoulder to shoulder with him in the administration of the business, an affection for the boy which he never let him know, an unexpressed desire to shift onto younger shoulders some of the business load he had carried alone for so many years.

Then, after a quarter century of success as measured by the ability to have his own way, the world began to rock. Wages went up, not five or ten per cent., but forty, fifty, sixty per cent. This in itself was not so important while every advance could be passed on to the consumer, but Norton knew what this increase would do to the morale of the men, and his apprehensions grew.

"Workmen can't stand getting what they want," he emphasized to his Board of Directors; "they can't

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stand prosperity. Keep 'em lean, with wrinkles in their bellies, and they will work instead of talk, and that saves a lot of trouble."

With the demand for labor so much in excess of the supply, Norton was forced to make compromises during the months which preceded Richard's return, but he bided his time and awaited his opportunity to put the workmen back into their proper place. What surprised him was that the ex-service men who returned to their old positions after demobilization were the least tractable. They should have learned from their army experience the lesson of absolute and immediate obedience to the orders of their superiors. But when Richard came home he would know how to handle them.

IV

With Richard's home-coming James Norton's philosophy of life received still another jolt. The boy insisted upon thinking for himself and acting upon his own conclusions. Previously Richard might have sputtered over his father's arbitrary decisions, but he always accepted them. Now he listened respectfully and then calmly advanced his own opinions, with apparently no idea that such independence was rebellion. When James Norton advised him of the decision to transfer him from the works to the office, Richard not only showed no appreciation of the concession, but actually declined it.

"I'll be no good anywhere for a while," he explained; "but I'll do better in a job where I have to work hard with my hands."

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His father might have been satisfied if Richard had confined his labor to that of his hands, but during the months since his return Norton found that the young man's head had never for a moment ceased to function. Richard was changed, and for the worse, his father reluctantly but emphatically concluded. The boy's ideas had become fixed and he was as stubborn as a mule. He refused to quarrel with his father, but made no effort to conceal his entire disapproval of the type of management which to the older man was second nature. Why should his own son turn against him and take the side of the men? They were quite competent to present their own brief. And as for Richard's arguments . . . they were actually socialistic! What annoyed Norton most was the expression left on Richard's face at the termination of every discussion. When others disagreed with James Norton they made a point of concealing it, but Richard's disapproval was written all over him. The two men had ceased to speak the same language, and their sole remaining community of interest was gone.

"All right, father," Richard said wearily at the conclusion of one of these "scenes," "let's let it go at that. I can't make you see things my way and I can't agree with you. You have built blinders over your eyes and you can't look through them. Some day the men will take things into their own hands and tear those blinders off."

"They will if they can," Norton retorted; "you may be sure of that. But they have tried it before and I'm still on my job. And that job is to demand from the

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workmen what they owe in exchange for what I give them."

"You don't ask enough of them at that," Richard surprised his father by saying; "you ask too little of their heads. You not only don't ask them to think but you won't let them."

"Of course I won't . . . I knew there was some catch in that remark. If a workman thinks one thing he'll think another, and the first thing you know he'll get his thoughts centered on our profits and his wages. Then he'll demand more money."

"That's what he's thinking about now," Richard insisted; "you can't stop it. Give him something about his job to use his thinkers on and get his mind off the things you don't want him to think about."

Norton regarded his son steadily for a moment. Then his face assumed that expression which Richard dreaded.

"You and the other fellows who went into service have come home with the idea that you know it all, haven't you? I thought you would learn obedience and respect for the experience and knowledge of your superiors. Far from it . . . you all know how to run this business better than I do after forty years in the shafts. Why don't you apply some of the army discipline to business instead of being insubordinate and pigheaded? How much thinking did they ever let you do in the army?"

Richard smiled in spite of his mood as the question recalled certain episodes in France where the American army, raised over night and put into action before

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military traditions could be assimilated, failed to live up to the strict discipline associated with the service.

"The boys did think over there, father, every time they had a chance. Of course it was wrong from a military standpoint. We were the worst disciplined but the most unbeatable army in the world. You don't want automatons in the plant; you want real men, . . . men who think but whose line of thought can be guided, men who can feel that they put themselves into their work and can get some satisfaction out of their efforts. You are the master mind, of course; but the men would give you far more than you can ever drive out of them if they once felt that their work was an expression of their own free will."

"Isn't it wonderful!" the older man rejoined sarcastically. "My son, full of the wisdom of twenty-eight years, gives his father a primary school lesson on how to handle men! My boy, . . . I was the head of this business before you were out of swaddling clothes. I have studied it root and branch all these years while you have been growing up. I know what is going on in every department, at every desk, even inside every machine. Do you think you can tell me anything I don't know about my own business?"

"Yes," Richard retorted quickly; "you may know what is going on inside every machine, but you don't know what is going on inside the men's heads. I do, and unless you find out there is trouble ahead and plenty of it for the Norton Manufacturing Company!"

CHAPTER IV

I

TWO OR THREE months after Lola Stewart returned from over-seas, she received a telegram from the Red Cross in Chicago stating that a one-legged ex-service man, Barry O'Carolan by name, stranded without funds, had applied for assistance in getting to Norcross, claiming that he had an invitation to visit her there.

This message recalled to Lola that part of her war service in which she had taken greatest satisfaction, for it was a case where she had been able to see tangible results. It brought back a vivid picture of the great ward in which she had worked tirelessly, ceaselessly, even hopelessly, as the stream of wounded men poured in and passed out, . . . cured and ready for further service, convalescent, or tightly rolled in their army blankets. So much had to be impersonal there, for patients as well as for surgeons and nurses, that to have any one separate himself from the others was in itself an event. Barry had been the event in Lola's hospital experience.

"See what you can do with that case over there," the surgeon said to her. "He has a wonderful constitution,

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but he doesn't want to pull through, and he won't unless some one can interest him in something."

Lola looked up his record:

BARRY O'CAROLAN: sergeant; age, 30; mechanic, 34th Aero Squadron. Shot down with his plane near Grand Pré. Previous occupation, big game hunter. Home address, Collins, Wyoming. Next of kin, none.

There he lay in his narrow cot, with his face stubbornly turned to the wall, physically helpless and mentally rebellious at any attempt to relieve his suffering or to give him hope for the future. When Lola succeeded in getting him to answer her at all there was a surly resentment in his voice and antagonism in his attitude.

"Why can't you leave me alone?" he demanded, turning toward her. "There's no use tryin' to do anythin' for me. I'm done for."

"I wouldn't admit that," Lola disputed quietly.

"You nurses make me tired! I'm not a kid. I know when I'm done for. It's a hell of a kindness to patch a feller up so he can live on and starve! Why couldn't they do a good job and let me pass out as a hero for my country instead of stayin' on as a no-account cripple?"

"What makes you think you'll have to starve?"

"Think," he growled; "isn't that just like a woman! I don't think, . . . I know. The only thing I can do to earn a livin' is hunt big game. Did you ever try huntin' big game with one leg? P'raps I could whistle

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and charm the brutes to stand in front of my cabin while I shoot 'em!"

"I never tried it," Lola admitted; "but I have an uncle who has."

"Hunted big game with only one leg?"

Barry turned his face to her again, but his expression showed absolute incredulity.

"Yes," Lola continued; "I used to go hunting with him often. Once there was a bear that the whole county was trying to kill. My uncle was keen to be the one to bring him in, but the only way to go after him was on horseback. So my uncle had himself tied onto an Indian pony with a rope, and he brought that bear home."

"You're not lyin', . . just to cheer me up?" Barry demanded, weakening in his rebellion.

"No; it happened exactly as I tell you," she replied. "If you will pay me a visit at my home in America some time, I will show you the pelt."

From that moment Barry began to improve. What one man could do was not impossible for another. Lola spent much time with him as he convalesced, and gained his confidence. He told her of his hermit life in Wyoming, where he lived in a cabin in the hills, taking his pelts to market twice a year. His father had been a mechanic, and Lola was interested in the description of some of the ingenious devices Barry had installed in his cabin and in the woods, demonstrating his natural genius in following the parental footsteps. This stood him in good stead when he offered himself for war service. He told her of his training at Kelly Field, of his

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transferral over-seas to Issoudun, of his disappointment in having his service confined to repair work and trial flights of machines, while the pilots went into action against the beasts of the air. The surliness disappeared, and before he was well enough to be invalided home Barry O'Carolan had learned how to give out from himself that crude philosophy which Nature teaches only to those who come in contact with her.

Thus it was that Lola extended to him the indefinite invitation to come to Norcross "some time," and from the Red Cross telegram she learned that he remembered it.

II

So Barry O'Carolan became a Norcrossian. His arrival attracted little attention, but he rapidly made himself a veritable part of the town. Lola installed him in simple but comfortable quarters in an outbuilding on the Stewart estate, and here the family shared with her the responsibility of proving to her ward that life was still worth living. The discouragement Barry felt over the slowness with which the Government met its obligation was offset by the interest expressed in him by his new friends. Mr. Stewart suggested that a place be found in the machine shop at the factory, but Lola explained the necessity of outdoor work for a man who had lived all his life in the open.

Lola's mother, passionately fond of her flowers, unexpectedly solved the problem when she put Barry to work in the garden. A fugitive glimpse of Mrs. Stew-

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art, as she pattered over her flowers with her *protégé* beside her, might leave only a memory of a very active blue-and-white-checked gingham sunbonnet, but a glance within would have disclosed a face which in sweetness challenged any blossoms the garden produced. The sparkle still remained in Mrs. Stewart's eye, a smile was ever on her lips. Before Lola left home for her war-work, friends spoke of her as a younger replica of her mother, but since her return the girl seemed the elder of the two.

At first Barry was half ashamed of his new occupation, and Lola observed him carefully as he passed through this phase.

"Think of me shootin' bugs off plants, Miss Lola, instead of big game up Wind River or Boches in France," he said to her one day; but under Mrs. Stewart's skilful guidance Barry eagerly absorbed the subtle message which flowers express to understanding souls. His life in Wyoming, with Nature as his sole companion, fitted him to comprehend, for the language of the flowers is the same as the language of the forests and the hills.

At first a flower was a flower to Barry, the only difference lying in its shape, color, or fragrance; but Mrs. Stewart took pains to weave romance in with the horticultural knowledge taught him by the old gardener. Starting in with the Spring, Barry, with his sympathetic guide, welcomed the drooping snow-drops, the daffodils, and the timid crocuses. The Winter had been a trial to him, not only for the limitations it placed upon his physical activities, but because it was the period of unhappy experimentation, now fortunately

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ended by Mrs. Stewart's inspiration. These first blooms seemed to Barry the harbingers of a new life, but his discouragement had been so long extended that he was fearful to accept anything as a fact. Mrs. Stewart sensed this, and she gave him Holmes's little poem to read:

*"When wake the violets, Winter dies;
When sprout the elm buds, Spring is near;
When lilacs blossom, Summer cries,
 'Bud, little roses, Spring is here!'"*

From that time on Barry associated his own life with the lives of the flowers, and watched eagerly for the violets and the sprouting of the elm buds. Seeing his interest, Mrs. Stewart taught him the symbolism of the flowers, and gave him other volumes from which to learn their story. Lola, feeling her responsibility keenly, was at first worried by the light showing late at night in Barry's quarters, watching it from the window of her own chamber. When she spoke to him about it, cautioning him that until his full strength returned his rest was all-important, Barry plunged quickly into his room and returned with an armful of books.

"Look, Miss Lola!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Mis' Stewart has let me take all these, and I'm readin' 'em through. I never was much on readin' before the war, but you know how we had to do somethin' there to kill time. They were short of books, so one day the library lady tore one of 'em up, and divided it among us. It was written by a highbrow cuss named Carlyle. Think

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of me readin' that stuff! But I had to do somethin,' and say . . . that feller had some real ideas. I can remember some of 'em now; 'What have you done, you son of a gun?' he says. 'If you've got happiness or unhappiness, why that's only just your wages, and you've spent that in payin' for your chow, . . you've eaten it all up by this time. Now how about your work? Be quick and trot it out. Lets' see what you've really done!' . . Those aren't the exact words, Miss Lola, but the idea is somethin' like that."

Barry's quotation was not clear to Lola, but later, in her father's library, her search was rewarded: "Happiness, unhappiness; all that was but the wages thou hadst; thou hast spent all that in sustaining thyself hitherward; not a coin of it remains with thee, it is all spent, eaten; and now thy work, where is thy work? Swift, out with it; let us see thy work."

Thomas Carlyle would have rejoiced in the practical application of his immortal message!

Lola watched the new light in Barry's eyes, and her thoughts instinctively went back to those hopeless days in the hospital when she struggled to give him an interest in life.

"You had forgotten that when you didn't want us to pull you through," she reminded him.

"How could I forget somethin' I never knew before?" Barry asked sheepishly. "I didn't even get that feller's idea 'til I came here. What had I done anyhow? Just shot pelts for the market, sold 'em, and got my wages. Then I ate the wages up, just as that feller said. Now

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I'm really doin' somethin' more. Your mother gave me those books to read, . . and say . . . every flower has a story of its own, just like a person. Remember how the kids used to tramp down this garden? They don't do it now, do they? I caught a couple of 'em and they thought they were in for a lickin', but I took 'em right up to the violet-bed, and I says, "See what you've done. Those little flowers have life just as much as me or you." Then I told 'em the story about how Jupiter made the violet to feed to the girl his wife got jealous of and changed into a cow, and they were sure interested. Now they come 'round every day askin' me to tell 'em stories, and I have to read these books your mother gives me to keep ahead of 'em."

Barry's eyes twinkled as he paused for a moment.

"You ought to see those little devils weed the garden while I tell 'em stories about the flowers!"

III

So the blooms in the garden succeeded one another in the rotation which Nature ordains, but the bloom in Barry's heart became perennial, crowding out the bitter memories of severed limb, unintelligent governmental paternalism, and a hopeless future. Barry O'Carolan became a Norcross institution. Whenever he would admit the children to the garden they flocked about him; when he limped to the post-office they flanked him on either side, and Barry thoroughly enjoyed their companionship. Life for him settled down into a satisfying minor key in which all the chords were harmonious. If he was aware of the struggle in the heart of

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his benefactress, he gave no evidence of it; if Richard Norton's restlessness was still obsessive, Barry seemed blissfully unconscious of it. The autocratic old man in the great house on the Hill might be breaking his heart over his son's rebellion and the arrogance of his men; the workmen in the Norton factory might be seething with discontent and plotting mischief, . . . but Barry O'Carolan, once hunter of big game on the slopes of the Rockies, now hunted contentment and philosophy among the gentle flowers which were his daily companions, and in the "highbrow" poems which great writers had composed to the glory of his new-found friends.

CHAPTER V

I

AUGUST in Norcross can be appreciated only by those who have experienced it. There are many families who still consider the summer exodus to the shore essential to their comfort and their self-respect, but in Norcross this is the demand of habit rather than necessity. The Stewarts had long since outgrown the conventional summer-gadding habit, preferring to break their year in the winter season by trips to California or Florida, Italy or Southern France. Even the continuous residence enforced by war conditions did not prove irksome to them; for the great white blanket Nature spread over the meadows, and the masses of hemlocks and cedars weighted with glistening snow, formed a picture with which they were never satiated.

When once the business section of the town is left behind, the broad meadows spread out like an up-to-date Elysian field, with the single difference that one may wander there without having qualified as among the blessed. Still, was not Menelaus, with all his glorious faults, granted place beside the elect because he was Helen's husband and the son-in-law of Zeus? By the

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same token and with little stretch of the imagination we may understand the position of certain Norcrossians because of the beatific attributes of their better halves, or relationship to the mighty . . . Beyond the meadows are the timberlands, marking by gradual ascent the elevation which culminates in the Blue Hills, and the great silver splotch dazzling in the summer sun is East Lake, the brilliancy of which invites one to seek its sparkling glories.

II

The location of the Stewart house, well up on what Norcrossians call "The Hill," affords a wonderful panoramic view. Here, in the *loggia*, in the late August afternoons, neighbors and other friends are wont to gather for tea or some cooling form of refreshment. On these occasions William Stewart as host is at his best. He is tall and handsome, so courtly and courteous that people call him "a gentleman of the old school." His quiet demeanor gives one the false impression that he is impositive. In reality this does not indicate a lack of energy, but rather that necessity has taken no hand in his making. Mrs. Stewart and Lola naturally relieve him of all cares of home, and he has formed the habit of letting James Norton establish his business policies. This leaves him leisure to gratify his love for the beautiful in arts and letters, accumulating the jewels which others drop in his lap, without the incentive of adding even a thread on which to string them.

On this particular afternoon Mr. Stewart is discuss-

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ing Botticelli and Florentine art with a congenial soul, while Lola's mother explains the intricacies of a new crochet stitch to an ambitious caller. Lola has presided at the tea table, but as her duties for the time being are fulfilled she listens patiently to the running fire of small talk, in which gentle art William Treadway is an adept. Treadway, James Norton's personal secretary, is tall and slight, with a blonde moustache which must cause him some concern as he is constantly striving with his fingers to weave it into new patterns. His two passions in life are power and Lola Stewart. The first seems possible of achievement, for energy and persistence will never be denied; the second is more difficult because of Richard Norton. But Treadway possesses the useful attribute of patience.

He is immaculate today in his golf flannels sitting next to Lola. On the other side is Richard Norton. It is easy to understand the underlying antagonism between the two young men, . . even on the surface it is ill-concealed. Treadway naturally sympathizes with the master on all points of difference with his son; Richard considers Treadway's subtle jealousy as responsible for much of the discord in the Norton family. When to this is added their joint admiration for Lola, the ingredients are complete for constant fermentation.

"If I stopped smoking," Treadway remarked gazing contemplatively at his half-consumed cigarette, "I shouldn't know what in the world to do with my face."

"Some smokers don't know what to do with their faces even then," Richard commented.

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"No intention of making any personal application, I hope," Lola inquired, holding up her own cigarette.

"Not at all," he hastened to explain. "I am so afraid Treadway will get back onto his hard-luck golf stories that I am trying to encourage him to talk about something interesting."

"Oh, I say!" Treadway protested. "Every golfer has to talk about his game afterwards. That's its chief attraction. But I do have more hard luck than anybody else. I simply can't keep the ball in the fair-green. Why, the last time I played, when I finally got out of the long grass, the chap I was with said, 'Strangers are not allowed on this course!'"

Lola laughed, but Richard continued to make sport of him. He was impatient to have Lola to himself.

"Don't you care, Treadway," he railed him; "nobody else does."

"It's not fair for people to josh me about my golf," Treadway declared feelingly, . . "I really got so little chance to play. When I figure out how much each game costs me, I am aghast at the extravagance of my club expenses."

"Figure it on the basis of strokes, Treadway, and it will make it look cheap," Richard retaliated.

"Come, boys, be reasonable," Lola interfered. "I'm tired of being amused. Tell me why this book here is having such a success."

She help up the novel of the day, which she had laid down when her callers arrived.

"I can't find any one who likes it any better than I do, yet everybody is talking about it," she added.

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"Each one asks the other how he likes it, and each stalls to get the other's expression before he commits himself!" Richard laughed. "That's human nature."

"But the story is so drab . . . realistic, I'll grant, but the scenes it records so photographically and the odors it revives are all so commonplace and unpleasant . . . Why do people want to read about such things, anyway?"

"Have you never noticed how much every one prefers to talk about his troubles than his blessings?" Richard explained . . . "like Treadway, telling us about his golf . . . but, seriously, isn't it true? . . . people revel in conversation which is pitifully uninteresting in its personalities and become tongue-tied when a topic of general interest is broached . . . You didn't buy that book because you expected to be absorbed by it, but because you weren't willing to acknowledge again that you hadn't read it, . . . come now, 'fess up!"

"Yes, . . . I'll plead guilty," she acknowledged frankly; "but in this case I really thought I would learn something. After an every-day over-the-teacup conversation, I'm willing to be instructed."

"That puts me out of the running," Treadway acknowledged. "I don't believe in mixing things. My theory of life is to concentrate, . . . work while I work and play while I play. This is my play-time, and I refuse to assume the rôle of pedant."

"You are joking, I know," Lola answered him seriously; "but I have noticed how definitely you lay down your rules for living. Don't you sometimes find it difficult to keep them consistent?"

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"Oh, every rule has to have its exception," he answered lightly, her recognition of his purpose obviously pleasing him. "I have ambitions, but no American need be ashamed to admit that. I intend to make my mark on the world instead of letting the jolly old world make its mark on me. Success never comes haphazard, so I plan everything out. Not so complicated, is it?"

III

Mr. Stewart's listening caller had received his fill of Florentine art and departed, so Lola's father joined the group of young people in time to hear Treadway's explanation.

"That is a good basis for any American to work on," Stewart commented; "but I don't quite agree with you about not letting the world make its mark on you. They talk about Americans being born. That isn't so, . . . Americanism is a thing to be achieved . . ."

"By action," Treadway interrupted with confidence.

"Not wholly," Mr. Stewart corrected. "That is where I think your theory a bit weak. True Americanism is a thing of the mind, . . . the result of thought and experience as well as of action. And when one has really achieved Americanism he need not fear to have the world make its mark on him, for it will be the hallmark of approval."

"That's fine, Mr. Stewart!" Richard exclaimed. "I wish we could hear you talk on these subjects oftener. What you say always gives us an inspiration."

"Scarcely that," Stewart demurred; "but I do think

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I am at fault to spend my life assimilating instead of giving out. It is a selfish habit."

"My daddy selfish!" Lola cried affectionately, pressing his hand to her cheek. "Why, I never could think of you as one to go out into the mercenary world. You seem to belong right here in this frame. There are plenty of men for business, and who shall say that your dreaming or your life among your books is selfish? You share your dreams with us all, daddy, and that helps to keep us true to our ideals."

"Ah, child," her father answered, kissing her, "you and your mother spoil me. Dreams and books! . . .

*"'Dreams, books, are each a world: and books we know,
Are a substantial world, both pure and good.
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.'"*

As the older man left them, Treadway rose.

"I thought at first he was complimenting me, but I really believe he was calling me down," he said half jocosely and half in pique. "I must jog along now and think it all over . . . Coming, Dick?"

"Not yet," Richard answered; "don't wait for me."

IV

"Why don't you like Billy Treadway?" Lola demanded when they were alone.

"What makes you think I don't like him?"

Lola laughed.

"You bristle all over whenever you're with him. Why do you dislike him?"

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"If I have myself so poorly under control as to expose my feelings to the world," he replied, "I must cultivate restraint."

"I am not 'the world,' Dick. Perhaps I understand your expressions better than some others."

"You are all the world to me, Lola," he cried impulsively, at the same time drawing his chair beside hers and taking her hand. "There is no one else who understands me at all . . . Do you know, Lola, if you were to look at me just once as you did at your father a moment ago, I'd believe there was some chance of wedding bells."

"You silly boy!" Lola scolded. "We aren't children any longer. You don't want merely an emotional sweetheart, do you?"

"You weren't so terribly matter-of-fact before I went to France."

"We were scarcely more than children, Dick. Then I was inexperienced enough to believe that love . . . our love, was everything; now we know how little one's personal affairs count in the scheme of things, don't we?"

She paused for a moment and looked away from him. Then she turned back.

"What a revelation we have had since, Dick!" she exclaimed. "We were boy and girl before, . . now we're just relics of the war, looking at the world through the empty rims of our spectacles, without the rose-tinted glass. I haven't the desire to be petted or kissed that I had before, . . I admit it; but oh, Dick, I love you a thousand times more!"

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"Then why don't you marry me?" he demanded for the hundredth time.

"Because now I couldn't be satisfied with the Dick you were before you went to France any more than you could be content with the aimless, heartsick girl you left behind. Each of us requires more, and each can give more to the other. I am trying to make myself the woman you ought to marry; you must make yourself the man my husband must be if he is to hold my love."

"Then I have slipped . . ."

"Don't be hurt, dear . . . You haven't slipped, but you don't seem to feel the necessity of forcing the world about you to recognize what your development has taught you . . . Don't let what I say discourage you . . . When you spoke about your vision, you uncovered something which is very precious to me. Turn that vision into reality, Dick!"

"But how?"

"Ah! That is the test . . . but you can meet it! Daddy would tell you that a real prophet must have voice as well as vision. You have the vision, Dick, and the voice will come to you. I don't ask it for myself, or for you, but for those whom we are pledged to serve. While you are translating your ideals into action, I have as much to accomplish for myself and with myself. Can't you see, dear! Until we both have proved ourselves true to what the war taught us, we have not earned the right to think of ourselves."

"I try to be patient, Lola," he answered still unconvinced; "but I can't see why we couldn't do all that you say far better together than alone."

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"We first must prove that we can do it alone, dear, as a guarantee that we can do it together. Something has been given to you that has been denied to others. The opportunity is here. The light cast by your vision, Dick, shows you the hitherto concealed entrance from the outside of the world to its very core. Other men, who came home from France with the spirit but without the power of expressing it, call upon you to lead them. It is a call, Dick, that you can't ignore."

The girl was fired by her enthusiasm, and Richard looked at her in sincere admiration. Her appeal was irresistible, her words brought back the thrill he experienced at Toul when the veil was for the moment lifted, and he saw beyond. Yes, Lola had changed. Yet could he question her love? She had just expressed in him unbounded faith, and faith surely is akin to love. It was such a moment as comes but rarely, and it affected him deeply.

"There was only one Jeanne d'Arc, Lola," he said feelingly; "but her spirit has been bequeathed to you. I could not resist it even if I wanted to. It is not a question of desire, but of ability. I will try to hold fast, but I fear that you demand more than I have in me."

Lola's face lighted with pleasure.

"Let me be judge of that! If you really try, you cannot fail. Now kiss me, Dick, not merely as lovers kiss, but in pledge of mutual service to the world which will entitle us later to our own personal reward."

Protected by the dusk into which the lengthened shadows merged, he held her a prisoner in arms which

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had no thought of yielding. But presently Lola checked him. Holding him off, she looked full into his eyes with a smile of happy anticipation.

"I really believe you understand me!" she cried. "I've been afraid you'd think I was demanding too much, dear. But you do understand, don't you? There are so few who see things as they really are that our responsibility is just that much the greater, isn't it?"

"Yes, Lola," Richard agreed. "I'll admit all that, but still I don't see why we can't kiss each other without making it a matter of ritual. I meant exactly what I said when I called you Jeanne d'Arc,"—he held her face between his hands as he completed his sentence with marked significance—"but . . . that little d'Arc girl didn't wear her armor *all* the time!"

CHAPTER VI

I

WHILE Lola was dressing for dinner that evening her mother came into the room and carefully adjusted herself in the great arm-chair. The slight form was almost lost in its ample recesses, but Mrs. Stewart required no reinforcing cushions to hold her in position or to enable her to preserve her self-respect. In her generation girls were taught to make use of their backbones and to keep both feet on the ground, and her early education became a habit. A dainty footstool, it must be admitted, filled in the space between Mrs. Stewart's tiny feet and the floor, but this necessity was due to Nature's selection of a diminutive mold in fashioning her attractive personality rather than to any lack of early training.

The gown Mrs. Stewart had selected this evening was organdie of purest white, but scarcely more so than her hair, prematurely turned. Her face was delicately suffused with color, her skin fair and fine in texture, showing but slightly the effect of her daily association with the garden; and the single touch other than white was a large emerald brooch, a family heirloom. Sitting as she was in the great arm-chair, she

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made a striking picture against the pink chintz which caused her daughter to regard her with undisguised admiration.

"Mother, dear, you look like one of the Madonna lilies, transplanted from the garden to my chamber. Truly, you are most decorative!"

Mrs. Stewart had not come to Lola's room to be complimented, and her daughter knew it. Her functions in the household were performed quietly, but with a regularity and directness which accomplished results. Lola was fully aware before her mother spoke that her presence at this time predicated a discussion of importance, and during the process of adjustment in the arm-chair she wondered what the subject was to be.

"I'm troubled about Richard," Mrs. Stewart said bluntly, after acknowledging her daughter's compliment with a smile . . . "He doesn't seem himself at all. Has anything happened?"

Lola was still under the spell of the conversation she had so recently had, and regretted that her mother's question had not been postponed in the asking. Richard had seemed to be impressed by what she had said, but could he make the application? Until she knew, her reply must be indefinite.

"We are still engaged, if that is what you mean," she said at length.

"When is the wedding to be?"

"Neither one of us is ready to be married yet," she evaded, flushing slightly as she turned back to the mirror and combed her hair. "We were talking it over only this afternoon."

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"Does Richard feel as you do about it?"

"Not . . . exactly," Lola admitted. "I'm hoping that he understands better from what I said to him to-day. Dick has lost faith in everything. He has a wonderful opportunity before him to accomplish a great work if he can be made to see it. I am trying to show it to him."

"Why couldn't you guide him even better if you were married?"

"That is what Dick asks, . . but I know that I'm right. He came home with wonderful ideals, and then he slumped. If we were married now, he would settle down into the same useless routine as the others, and all he gained would be lost. If I can make him see his opportunity, then he will have an incentive. Thus far I haven't been wholly successful. Until then, mother dear, I'm trying to be the little wisp of hay in front of him, to urge him on."

Mrs. Stewart did not respond to the lighter tone in which the girl spoke the last words.

"You are trying to carry the responsibilities of the whole world on your shoulders since you came home," she exclaimed, making no effort to conceal her disapproval. "You are mothering every ex-service man in Norcross, you are sympathizing with all their family troubles, you are worrying over their sick wives and babies, and now you are doing the thinking for Richard . . . We have lost the daughter we used to have, Lola, and we miss her sorely."

"Am I so different, mother dear?" Lola exclaimed.

The expression Lola surprised on her mother's face

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as she turned caused her to lay down the comb and perch herself on the arm of the great chair.

"I didn't realize that I had changed so much," she added.

"Your father and I are most unhappy about it," Mrs. Stewart admitted. "While you were away we were sustained by a certain exhaltation. Our loneliness was part of our contribution, and was partially offset by our pride in the splendid work you were doing. Our hearts have been hungry for you, dear, and that craving still remains unsatisfied. The daughter who went away from us has never returned. Richard must feel it too, and that may be one reason why he has lost faith."

II

Lola could not answer her mother at once. She knew that what had just been said was true. How could she make it clear that the change which had taken place was simply a broadening of her horizon? Up to the time when she left for her work Lola's life had been completely centered in home and parents; now they were but part of the greater life which she saw before her. The new outlook did not lessen her devotion to them, but it did require her to divide her allegiance, and this was what her mother felt. To acknowledge the fact, or to attempt to explain it would only cause greater unhappiness, for not even her parents could understand. No one could understand who had not passed through the fire.

"Mother dear, I didn't realize that I was making

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you and daddy unhappy. I suppose I am changed . . . no one could see what I've seen and remain the same. But my love for my dear ones . . . for you and daddy and Dick . . . is greater than it ever could have been before I learned what love really means in this world where hatred and selfishness hold the upper hand."

"But, my child, that isn't true," Mrs. Stewart protested. "The Bible teaches . . ."

"Dearie," Lola interrupted with a sigh, "there are hundreds of thousands of sweet, good people like you who refuse to believe this because they don't want to believe it; but until the fact is recognized the task of fighting it is made more difficult. What any one person can do is so insignificant that it is absolutely discouraging. Take my work with the disabled boys here . . ."

"You are spending too much time and are working too hard with them, Lola."

"The hard part, dear, and that which takes the most time, is occasioned by the lack of co-operation and appreciation on the part of those who were over-zealous during the period of war hysteria. Why, I can't even get enough motor cars to take my disabled soldiers riding, when before there were more cars offered than could be used! It is simply disheartening, mother, and this apathy triples the responsibilities of those who still realize the necessities."

"But do you have to do it all, Lola?" Mrs. Stewart asked. "Do you think your new duties relieve you of your old ones? Your father and I aren't disabled

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soldiers, but our hearts are wounded, dear. Perhaps Dick's heart is hurt a little, too."

III

Lola felt the criticism, and her first reaction was that in making it even her mother was touched by the epidemic of selfishness which contaminated the world. Perhaps she was not giving to her parents and to Richard the former undivided affection, but they needed it so much less than these helpless, half-neglected heroes who had so freely contributed their present and their future to save humanity. Of course her mother did not realize that what she asked was selfish, but the sum total of this lack of realization was what produced the unhappy condition.

"Haven't you found happiness in what you have done for Barry?" she asked.

"Great happiness, my child, not only in what it has meant to him but also in the joy I have seen come to you to have me do it. I rejoice in this opportunity to work with you, even in a small way, and I wish I might do more. But, Lola dear, I should consider myself to blame if I permitted my new responsibilities to make me forget my old ones. I wouldn't have you give up your work. Just keep it within reason, and remember that you can't do it all yourself."

Lola rose wearily and seated herself disconsolately in a near-by chair. Mrs. Stewart watched her anxiously, fearing lest she had said too much, yet convinced that her daughter needed another viewpoint for her own good.

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"Other girls who went to France have returned and taken up their lives just where they left them," Mrs. Stewart suggested.

"I know it, mother dear," Lola admitted, "and sometime I wish I were like them. A lot of the girls went over there because they craved adventure. Some of them did their work well, and all were satisfied. There were others who went because they simply had to *do* something, and in doing for others found greater personal happiness than they had ever known. That is true of me, dearie. I should be miserably unhappy to cease doing now, when the necessity for service is so much greater than ever before."

"Yet I have never seen you so wretched as since you returned."

"Doesn't the one go with the other, dear? We can't reach the heights without touching the depths, can we? I'm not choosing the suffering and the despair. It just comes as a payment I have to make for the real happiness I've experienced in being able to do something for others."

Mrs. Stewart was deeply impressed by Lola's words. For the first time since her daughter's return she had been permitted to enter the inner shrine, and what she saw there was inexpressibly beautiful. She closed her eyes for a moment and thanked God for this child of hers, and when she opened them again they were filled with tears. She rose quietly, and putting her arms around Lola's neck, kissed her affectionately.

"I never realized before how deeply you felt it," she whispered. "It seemed to me that it was over-zealous

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devotion to a fetish, but perhaps I am wrong. Your happiness, dear child, is all that your father and I live for, and if it lies in this direction, we must try to help you."

"Oh, mother darling!" the girl cried, "you don't know what it would mean to me if you could only understand! I have realized all the time that you were waiting for me to lay aside my work as I do my golf-sticks after the game is finished. This isn't a game, dear, . . . it is the real thing. It is life itself and will never be finished. I don't mean to neglect my old responsibilities except so far as the new ones are more vitally important. I don't mean to try to do it all. If you and daddy and my real friends would only understand this and help me, it would make it so much easier."

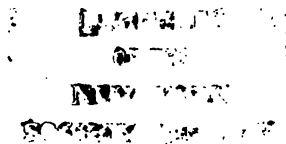
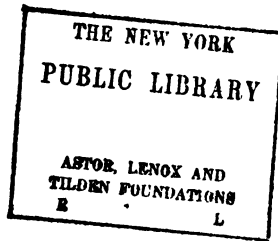
"Perhaps I am thinking too much of ourselves and of you," Mrs. Stewart admitted. "Now that the awful tragedy is over, it is natural that we should be eager to forget it and take up our lives again as if nothing had happened."

IV

Lola turned from her mother with a sigh of disappointment. As if nothing had happened! This from her own sweet, sympathetic, usually-comprehending mother! It was hopeless. No one except those who had seen the awful crucible of war could understand. For years to come curious tourists would cross the ocean to gaze at martyred towns in devastated France,

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while their eyes refused to see the shattered bodies and the smouldering ashes in the souls of those about them who risked their lives for something which they failed to find!



CHAPTER VII

I

BARRY O'CAROLAN, outwardly the most seriously affected by the toll of war, was in reality the only Norcrossian undisturbed by the gathering of the storm clouds in the hitherto peaceful New England village. Perhaps this was because he instinctively realized that the worst that could befall him had happened, and his agony of suspense was ended. At all events, the world looked good to him, and the peace which came to his once-troubled spirit expressed itself in his ever-present smile and contagious optimism. His quick intelligence enabled him to expand even as the flowers in the Stewart garden; but the development came so gradually that those around him scarcely realized how great the change until it had actually taken place, accepting without comment or surprise the evidences of the transition.

Except for the war, Barry would have remained a hunter of big game, his inward craving satisfied by communion with the vastness of Nature around him; now, in his new environment, he found in human companionship a stimulus previously denied him, and an intellectual comradeship in the books to which Mrs. Stewart

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introduced him, which forced him to apply as well as to absorb. What Barry O'Carolan had lacked in comradeship in the wilderness had been made up to him in the acute development of his mental faculties in matching them against the cunning of the beasts upon the mastery of which his livelihood depended. Guidance and opportunity alone were needed to bring his real self to the surface. Mrs. Stewart and Lola both enjoyed his unrestrained happiness, and marveled at occasional outbursts which showed an unconsciously developing poetic phase. In short, Barry had lost his leg but found his soul. His new friends gave full credit to the flowers for that.

II

One morning, as was frequently their habit, all three were working together in the garden, transplanting some of the younger rose bushes to form a richer mass of color. There was always a running conversation, started or encouraged by Mrs. Stewart or Lola, in which Barry's part was quaint and optimistic, but frequently unexpected.

"Do you miss the old life, Barry?" Lola asked him; "do you ever long to get back to your cabin in the hills where other people can't disturb you?"

"For a long time I thought I did," he admitted; "then I came to know I couldn't stand the solitude."

"That is what I should find most grateful," Lola declared.

"I used to think so myself, Miss Lola; that was why I stuck to big game huntin' . . . nobody to interfere

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with my thoughts, nothin' to break the silence of the mountains but the echoes. But that was before I went up in an areoplane."

Barry always pronounced this last word with the two letters transposed. His listeners failed to grasp the significance of his expression.

"You never know how terrifyin' solitude is 'til you get up in the air," he explained, . . "it is so empty and lonesome and still. Why, it doesn't even breathe!"

Both his hearers were surprised.

"I thought an aeroplane was the noisiest place in the world," Mrs. Stewart commented.

"The engine? . . . sure," Barry admitted; "but I mean the air itself. The whir of the motor and the roar of the exhaust make a terrific racket, of course, but this becomes so monotonous that you get used to it . . . it's the solitude that really catches you. Even when you're goin' a hundred miles an hour it seems like you were standin' plumb still . . . you don't go by anythin', . . just keep your bearin's by a river, or a railroad, or somethin' like that."

Barry stopped work for a moment and leaned against his spade, his eyes looking off into the distance beyond.

"I used to think the desert was the loneliest place in the world," he continued, "but it's not a patch on the air. Sometimes it's nothin' but clouds, oceans of 'em, and it seems as if the wheels were runnin' along on the cloud-bank. At first the beauty of it gets you, . . . then it turns to loneliness and makes you shiver."

Barry paused again. Then he turned to Mrs. Stewart.

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"Do you believe that the soul goes up into that silence, Mis' Stewart, when we die?"

"That is what the Bible teaches us," she assured him. "Isn't it a blessed thought to you, Barry?"

He hesitated lest he hurt her feelings. Barry had lived among these people long enough now to realize how insistent was their New England conscience upon a literal acceptance of the Bible.

"I'm not sure," he finally admitted. "I have a feelin' my soul would shiver all over just as I did if it went up into that awful solitude . . . Do you think it would be goin' against the Bible if I said I'd rather have my soul stay down here in the warm earth with my body and these roots and flowers? I think I'd rather do that if it don't make you folks unhappy to have me say so."

"I don't suppose it makes much difference what we want, Barry," Mrs. Stewart replied kindly. "The good Lord knows best what to do with our souls, and all our planning won't change it. But whatever it is . . ." she smiled up into his face in her motherly way, which always brought a lump in his throat, . . . "whatever it is, Barry, you may be perfectly sure that there will be no shivering and no lonesomeness."

"Of course you're right, Mis' Stewart," Barry stammered, abashed that he had exposed so intimate a thought. "You folks know how much I love these flowers, and it sort of pleased me to think that some day p'raps I could be a part of 'em. Flowers are different from people, . . . they just give you all there is of themselves without your askin.' I suppose that's their way of sayin' 'thank you' for keepin' the weeds from chokin'

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'em. P'raps, . . ." Barry had a sudden inspiration . . . "p'raps people would do that if they were treated the same way. There sure are a lot of human weeds in this world, and it would be a tough job to get rid of 'em."

"I presume, Barry, if it hadn't been for your accident, you would have made aviation your work," Mrs. Stewart remarked.

"No . . . ma'am!" was the emphatic response.

Noting the surprise on the faces of both, Barry explained.

"I suppose I ought to be ashamed, but I never went up in a plane without bein' scared. You see I did a good bit of flyin', and I know the danger. I never shied at goin' up, for that was my job, and I always did the best I knew how, but never again for me . . . from choice."

As Barry moved away to bring a barrow-load of new soil, Mrs. Stewart turned to Lola.

"What Barry just said confirms what you have told me about the boys over there. His frank admission of fear is peculiarly enlightening. The spirit of adventure which at first sustained him disappeared when he learned by experience how real the dangers were, . . . yet he met them without hesitation whenever duty called him."

"Truly, it was splendid!" Lola's face lighted as the conversation recalled those gloriously terrible days. "Some of the boys were fatalists, others risked their lives almost needlessly through the sheer thrill of danger, but there were many who, like Barry, faced death

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with fear in their hearts but with determination in their souls to conquer it."

"This war has given us a new standard of heroism," Mrs. Stewart added feelingly. "We had been taught that when Leonidas and his little band of Spartans at Thermopylae cast themselves headlong on the thousands of Persian invaders it was the most sublime act of heroism in all history. But the Spartans knew the dangers they faced, and met death with an exaltation which was adequate compensation . . . But what of that courage which faces a danger the presence of which is known but whose nature is an awesome mystery! That is what our boys did!"

III

Barry smoothed the earth around the last bush, and Mrs. Stewart turned back toward the house. As he straightened up he looked full into the girl's face and surprised there an expression she ever sought to conceal.

"Miss Lola!" he exclaimed impulsively, "please don't look like that. It's not right for me to be happy and contented when you are lookin' like a wounded doe."

"It's all right, Barry," Lola replied quickly, surprised at this first intrusion by her *protégé* into her personal affairs. "I can't seem to settle down since I came home."

Barry looked at her attentively. The girl saw his hesitation and she might have stopped him with a word, but somehow Barry's interest did not seem an intru-

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sion. She had given herself to him beyond any other experience in her life. He had accepted it always in the spirit in which it was offered; and during these months they could not fail to come to an instinctive understanding of each other's inmost feelings. She knew what he was going to say unless she checked him. She would have given worlds not to have it put into words, yet she stood there waiting for the undesired to happen.

Gaining courage by her silence Barry spoke.

"It's not that, Miss Lola, and we both know it isn't, . . . but I'll tell you that it's all goin' to come out right."

"You don't understand, Barry," she faltered weakly, with difficulty holding back the tears.

"Yes, I do," he insisted; "and now it's my turn to tell you to buck up as you told me in the hospital."

"I can't bear to lose this opportunity to make my service count!"

"You're not goin' to lose anythin', Miss Lola. Honest, you're not. You and I know that the Capt'n is one of the finest fellers that ever lived, and now he's just driftin', that's all. He'll get his feet on the ground pretty soon and everythin' will be better than ever. Now don't you worry. You be patient, just as you used to tell me, and I'll say everythin'll come out all right."

"I am worried about Mr. Richard," Lola admitted. "I have been afraid that he had become so discouraged that he would give up. I'm trying to hold him true to himself. It would be an awful pity if he gave up,

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wouldn't it, Barry? You and I know how much men like Mr. Richard are needed."

"He won't quit, Miss Lola," Barry insisted. "You can tell that by his face. Men are just like animals. When I was huntin' big game I could tell just how any critter was goin' to behave as soon as I could get my eye on his face. Some of 'em were tricky and some of 'em hadn't any spunk. The rest of 'em might fight hard but they'd fight fair and never quit. The Capt'n's face is all right, Miss Lola. He may get terrible discouraged before he strikes his gait, but I'll say he'll never lie down."

"You're lucky, Barry, to be able to get away from your war-self," she told him, eager to turn the conversation. "You are the only one of the boys who have been over-seas who seems contented."

Barry sobered.

"If that's true, Miss Lola, it's you who has done it for me. That's why I'd like to be the one to make things right for you. Over there, we fellers got to look for things to be better than they were before. They are better for me, but with the other boys they're worse. I am luckier than the others. You see, I got in the habit of lookin' at things from the air, and somehow an areoplane view is mighty different from a ground view. The other fellers keep on lookin' for more and they're findin' less. That's what keeps 'em upset. I'm sure mighty grateful for what you've done for me, Miss Lola."

"You've done it for yourself," she protested, "and you're doing much for all of us in setting an example

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of how we ought to think. We are looking for so much that we find less than there really is."

"I believe you're right," Barry assented eagerly, as if the idea had been Lola's own, "and even if you're wrong, that's a grand way to look at things. Some of 'em couldn't do that, Miss Lola, but you can, and I'd enjoy my contentment a whole lot better if you were happy too. Just thinkin' the way you said would help a lot, wouldn't it?"

"It would, Barry," she agreed without reserve; "and I will put your advice right into operation. From now on I'm going to take an air-plane view of everything! See . . ." she smiled happily . . . "I'm feeling more like myself already. I'll be ashamed to mope around any more while you are so cheerful. By believing that everything is all right, we can make it so. And Barry . . . do you realize how much more you have gained than you have lost?"

The change in the line of thought was too abrupt for him to follow, and he showed his perplexity in his face.

"You lost a leg," she said significantly, . . . "what have you gained?"

"Oh, that!" Barry laughed aloud. "Why, Miss Lola, I understand what you mean, . . . it might have been my eyes, so I couldn't see these flowers, or my nose, so I couldn't smell 'em . . . I understand. Shucks! What's an old leg compared with my findin' you?"

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IV

As Lola returned to the house her mind centered on what her *protégé* had just said. Unconsciously he had uncovered a fundamental . . . it is the ground view which limits the vision of the world to its own narrow, selfish horizon. Until the outlook can be from above, the development of peoples and of nations must stand still.

CHAPTER VIII

I

HOW often we conscientiously believe ourselves at variance with the judgment of others yet, when the test comes, prove by our action that this apparent difference in opinion is superficial rather than basic! It is usually the conflict between the head and the heart crowding us into a corner, from which coign of disadvantage the heart looks out with crooked eyes!

Richard had declared to Lola that his idealism had been shown to be so thoroughly impractical that he had discarded it; that as he could not change the world's attitude he must accept its standard, false though he knew it to be. When he was called upon to accept as fact that which he declared inevitable, Lola's prescience proved keener than his!

It was his father who forced it. As the days passed, the relations between the two became more and more intolerable. James Norton knew that the labor cauldron was seething, and endeavored to secure through Richard information as to its nature. This Richard steadfastly refused to give.

"Take your choice, my boy, and take it now," the

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older man finally said. "If I've got to fight against my own flesh and blood, the sooner I know it the better. If you are going to side with the men, then you are against the Company and me. You can't carry water on both shoulders. Which side do you take?"

Richard could not fail to detect the underlying note of appeal in his father's voice, domineering as it was, nor could he fail to realize that all future relations between them depended upon his answer. In the seconds of tense silence which followed the question, it seemed to him as if the events of his life thus far, as between his father and himself, marshalled themselves in a vivid series of unforgettable pictures.

II

There was his first and only physical punishment for some act of childish disobedience, when his mother's flashing eyes belied the calm firmness with which she held his angry father at bay and left so strong an impression that James Norton never again laid hands upon his son. There was that ever-present loneliness which every child inevitably feels when a parent is too preoccupied by other duties to give of himself in the thousand and one little ways in which youth takes delight. There were the constant verbal castigations which seared their marks upon the developing and sensitive negative of the growing boy's mind and heart. Into this brief moment of introspection came two fleeting memories which had contained elements of hope. One was the tragic moment after his mother's funeral, ten years before, when he and his father returned alone

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to the great empty house. For the first time in his life the older man threw his arms about his son and drew the boy to him.

"You are all I have left," he said brokenly, . . . "you must never disappoint me."

Richard had great expectations from that spontaneous expression of feeling; but, as the weeks and months went by, his father found the relief from his loneliness in longer business hours and more intense application to his work rather than in his son. Neither father nor son knew how to break down the intangible barrier between them, and the pregnant moment passed, leaving each thrown more than ever upon his own resources.

The unhappy curve of Richard's life took the second turn upward when he left for France. For the first time his father seemed pleased and gratified by an act of the boy's own volition, and showed a pride in him which raised hopes upon which Richard lived during those long months. He was certain that this time, when he returned, his father would treat him as a man, and that the great house would be robbed of its emptiness by the companionship each would give the other. But Richard had not been home twenty-four hours before he realized that he had again proved himself a disappointment, even though he could not discover in what way he had fallen short of expectations; and as time went on there came an absolute conviction that he could never find in his father nor could he give that which each sought and craved. Now, in the question his father put to him, Richard saw the final breach which would destroy even the semblance of amicable relations.

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III

"Don't put it that way, father," Richard begged. "I have never been disloyal to you or to the Company. What I urge for the men is of equal importance to the business, only you can't see it that way. There is no reason why the Company should be against the men or the men against the Company. The interests are identical, and knowing both sides better than any one else ought to make me of even greater value to you."

"It would, if you were willing to use your knowledge for my benefit; but you won't tell me what the men's plans are."

"Nor will I tell the men what your plans are. You wouldn't have me yellow either way, would you?"

"You're paid by the Company . . ."

"Not to spy on the men."

"You're paid to do as you're told, and I've told you to find out what the men plan to do, so that we can head them off."

Richard was silent.

"You still refuse?"

"Why don't you let the men appoint a committee and lay the situation squarely before them? They can't believe that things have turned as you and I know they have, but they would believe it if you showed them that bunch of cancelations and let them see how our inventories have dropped. Then listen to what they have to say on their side . . . That's all I ask."

"You'd have me treat them as partners, I suppose," Norton retorted.

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"They are partners. They always have been, and they are entitled to your confidence."

"Why not turn the business over to them and be done with it? If you are going to preach sovietism you might as well go the whole hog."

"Please, father," Richard implored. "You know I'm no bolshevist. This means more to me than anything that has ever come into my life. I have lived a century these last two years, and I have been face to face with conditions which have never come even to you. The war has given the men a new viewpoint, while many of those who are running our great industrial plants, like you, father, have stood still. Your methods may have been all right before the new viewpoint came, but you must take it into account now. I didn't create it, the men didn't create it, . . . the war did. I don't need to say whether I approve of it or not, but it exists, and you can't get away from it. Why not recognize the fact now voluntarily before you are forced to do so by the men themselves? Why not make use of me and my experience to put the new arrangement across?"

James Norton had been ominously calm. Richard knew his moods, and the present one precluded the possibility of successful argument.

"You're wasting your time and mine," Norton said with determination. "I have listened to you because you are my son. I would have thrown any one else out of the room who tried to talk such damned nonsense to me. Now get this . . . there may be a possibility of compromise in some things, but never in loyalty. You

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can't be almost loyal. Either you are with the Company or with the men. I am the Company. Labor has no place in the management of any concern, and I'll close these doors before I'll be false to my responsibility as the head of this corporation."

IV

Richard rose and walked slowly around the room, his father following every footstep. There was a nervous twitching in the older man's face which alone showed the emotion which he held so well under control. At last Richard turned suddenly.

"Father," he said quietly, with all evidence of his resentment dispelled, "we never have hitched up well together, and I've no doubt it's mostly my fault. But I'm older now. I've had experiences which have knocked the boy out of me. These have given me convictions which are entitled to respect just as much as yours. Because these convictions are different, is it necessary for us to quarrel? Can't we meet each other as men now, each with tolerance for the other's ideas, each willing to test the other's convictions and in that way prove which is right?"

"Why waste any time on that when I know you are wrong to begin with?"

"Wouldn't it be worth that waste of time to win me over to your ideas, if you are so sure that you are right?"

"I ought not to be obliged to win you. It should be enough for me to tell you."

"Perhaps it would be . . ." Richard hung on, hoping

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against hope . . . "if our differences affected only me. But I feel the situation so keenly! I fought for something in France, father, which hasn't come true. We thought we were victorious but to have such relations as at present exist right here between employer and employed proves that all our effort has really accomplished nothing."

"There's no difference between these relations and those which existed before the war," Norton insisted. "The men have used the conditions produced by the cataclysm to help them put their blackmail across. Now the time has come when they can't do that any longer, and the old relations must be re-established."

"That can never be . . ." Richard declared seriously.

"It shall be," his father retorted. "What you have said emphasizes the necessity. You suggest that I try out your way to prove that you are wrong? I propose to try my way to prove that I am right. Rebellious sons need discipline and demonstration as well as rebellious workmen. I'll break you just as I will break them!"

"It can't be done," Richard declared firmly.

"I've done it before, and I can do it again."

Norton became more insensed by his son's repeated statement.

"No, father; it's different now. Before, you were fighting against men whose horizon was limited to the tops of their machines. Today you are up against an idea, born in the midst of bursting bombs and flying shrapnel, under the light of floating star-shells. Do

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you suppose that a man who has absorbed that idea will ever again permit you or any other employer to treat him as a chattel? Those of us who have faced death without flinching are today facing life with the same determination. Break us? Why, it can't be done! The idea is bigger than all of us put together, and is indestructible!"

Norton regarded his son steadily. There was no mistaking the new note of authority in Richard's voice. His father realized at last that he was dealing with a man.

"You are more than a rebellious son," he said at length; "you have become a dangerous fanatic. This sort of talk will hypnotize a mob of ignorant workmen, but it doesn't go down with me. The man who works for money has always been and must always be subservient to the man with money. Any effort to change that relation means industrial revolution. If what you say is true, then this industrial revolution is upon us, and it is time for those who represent capital to fight for their principles. I for one am ready to accept the challenge now. It is for you to say whether you are with the men or with the Company."

Richard realized that the discussion was at an end. There was no possibility of breaking the deadlock. Two roads lay before him, but there was only one he could take.

"All right," he said quietly, with no effort to conceal his disappointment; "there is nothing more I can say. You ask where I stand, . . . I am neither for the men nor for the Company. I stand for the new indus-

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trial relations which recognize the rights of both. Because of you and men like you, who have listened all these years to the roar of their machinery instead of to the heartbeat of the world, . . . because of radicals in the labor ranks created by the system you uphold, . . . it means a fight to establish these new relations; and this is where I enlist. I hoped to work it out as your son . . . with your help and with your understanding. As that is impossible, I'll do it now as one of your workmen. And I pray God that the price we all have to pay to make right right is not greater than we can stand!"

"Then you defy me!" Norton said at length, his grizzled face aging in the moment. "I suppose you realize what that means?"

"In the Civil War it became necessary in certain cases for sons to take up arms against the cause their fathers fought for," Richard answered soberly. "History is repeating itself, but for the first time I realize what agony those sons suffered."

"So be it," the old man said huskily. "Henceforth I stand as the last of the Nortons."

"Father, I beg of you . . ."

Richard held out his hand beseechingly, but there was no response from the huddled figure sitting at the desk.

Gradually James Norton regained control of himself. The figure stiffened, and with a dramatic gesture he pointed to the door. Richard obeyed the command, turning with a last appeal to the stern face before he stepped beyond the threshold. Old Hannah, an

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elderly dependent of the household for more than a quarter century, who could not avoid hearing this altercation, as she had heard many others, was waiting in the hall with tears streaming down her face. She seized his hand and kissed it. He was her boy . . . her's, since his mother died . . . being driven from home, and her heart was broken. Richard tried to speak a word of gratitude, but the lump in his throat prevented anything but the silent pressure of her hand. Then he closed the door and walked out into the darkness.

V

Lola would have told him what he did not realize, . . . that what seemed darkness was really light, that he had at that moment turned his vision into action, and that at last the vision had found voice.

CHAPTER IX

I

TONY LEMHOLTZ was a power among the workmen in the Norton factory, and a shining example of what personal magnetism can accomplish without education in swaying the ideas and actions of other men. Tony was a fire-brand, and half the trouble he created in his labor-leadership came from the sheer delight of exercising his will over his fellow-workmen. Olga Mirovich was the only one he failed to influence, and perhaps that was why Tony was so furiously in love with her. Olga laughed at him, defied him, ridiculed him, yet she would miss the violence of his devotion for it gratified her vanity. Richard and Tony had been good friends until now, but the rumors of Olga's new interest in the son of her employer did not bode well for future friendship.

At the present moment, Lemholtz was in his element. The notice posted by the management that a reduced wage scale would be put into effect gave him something definite to work upon. The action of the Company in laying off men and running short hours came just at the time when plans were maturing to make further demands for increased wages, and to pull off the big

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strike. This action frightened some of the timid and more conservative members of the union, and caused a delay in action. The union officials were convinced that the wage cut was simply part of a backfire started by the management to forestall the demands of the men. One by one Tony persuaded the recalcitrants to get back into line by picturing the enormous profits which their efforts had piled up for the Company, and the necessity of standing with unbroken front when Oppression sought to rob Labor of its rightful share in the profits which opportunity had recently given them. This was the moment for which Tony had been impatiently waiting, and he was eager to make the most of it.

The situation also provided an opening for him to gratify his personal spite. It could scarcely have been a coincidence that the management should have taken their action at the precise moment which would stop the union in its aggressive plans. Some one on the inside must have squealed, and it was more than plausible to suggest that Richard Norton, posing as a friend of the workmen, was in reality acting as a spy of the Company. Tony Lemholtz was a good judge of men, and in his heart he was not so firmly convinced of Richard's culpability as would appear from the flat accusation he made to the men; but it suited his purpose to believe him guilty, particularly in his conversations with Olga; and he did not permit the opportunity to pass by.

"I will not believe it," the girl asserted vehemently. "Mr. Richard Norton is not that kind."

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"*Mister* Richard Norton!" Tony sneered. "You make me sick! If he is one of us, why do you keep stickin' on the 'mister'?"

"Because he is a gentleman, Tony Lemholtz," Olga retorted hotly, "and because he is my friend."

"Gentlemen don't mix with workin'-people, and when they're friends with factory-girls there's always some good reason."

"You know me, Tony Lemholtz, and so you know you lie. Mr. Richard Norton wants to help us, and he will if you don't stop him. He is my friend, and I trust him. That is more than I can say of you."

Tony's face darkened.

"We shall see," he muttered. "The men will believe what I tell 'em. You can say what you like to the women . . . they don't count. Except for *Mister* Richard Norton you would still be my girl, and he had better look out for himself. He is a spy, and I will get him for that. He will do you dirt, and I will get him for that. He had better keep out of my way. Damn *Mister* Richard Norton!"

Olga laughed tantalizingly.

"You are a big stiff, Tony Lemholtz! Mr. Richard Norton could tie you into a double knot with one hand, and have the other free to slap your face. We shall see tonight at the meeting whether the men believe he is a spy. But if you play your dirty tricks on him . . ." Olga's eyes snapped . . . "remember, Tony Lemholtz, I know you. 'I will get him for that,' mimicking Tony's voice to perfection. "All right, . . . then I will get you!"

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II

The meeting Olga referred to was called by the union for this Saturday night to take joint action on the question of the reduced wage scale. It was a foregone conclusion that a strike would be called, and the Company was prepared to meet the issue. Tony had done his work well, and the men stood as a solid phalanx; Olga's work with the women was equally complete. Between them, these two controlled the situation, so the meeting was scarcely more than a formality to record the voice of the working force, and to formulate plans for definite and concerted action. Tony knew that Richard Norton would be present. This could not be prevented, for Richard was a full-fledged member of the union, and in good standing. Tony had no evidence to substantiate the impression he had fostered among the men as to Richard's alleged treachery; but Tony had swayed men before by his personal magnetism, and what had been done once could be done again.

Lemholtz at once assumed control of the meeting. He rehearsed in glowing pictures the advantages which had come to the Company from the efforts of the workers in the months during and succeeding the war period. He compared the conditions of the workers preceding this time and at present. He emphasized the fact that the concessions made by the Company were not voluntary, but because necessitated by economic conditions; and now, at the first opportunity, the Company sought to restore the old serfdom. In this effort they would be successful if the workers did not stand together to

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the bitter end. The plant could not be operated without them. The power lay in their hands, and if they failed to use it they would prove themselves the dumb things the management believed them to be. All that was necessary to establish their present wages as a minimum was to stick together, and he called upon them now to assert their manhood by resisting the management at every point.

A roar of approval greeted the close of Tony's harangue, and he seated himself well satisfied with the result of his efforts. As the applause died away he again sprang to his feet.

"The vote!" he cried, . . . "and make it unanimous!"

"Not so fast!"

Richard's voice sounded clear and dominating as he rose in the center of the hall.

"I have something to say first."

"Don't listen to him," Tony cried, waving his arms dramatically. "He is a spy."

"Prove it!"

Richard crowded by the men and strode down the aisle toward the stage, never taking his eyes from Tony's face.

"Prove it!" he repeated after he had mounted the few steps and stood before his accuser. "Every person in this room believes in fair play. If I am a spy, prove it and I will take the consequences. If you can't, then I claim my right to speak."

"Who told the boss two weeks ago we were planning to strike?"

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"Not I, and you know me well enough, Tony Lemholtz, to know that I would not lie. If I had believed it to be my duty to tell him, I should have done so, but I should have told you all that I was going to do it. After what I've faced in France, I'm not afraid to face anything here . . . Tony Lemholtz has made a statement he knows is false. At the right time he shall answer to me for it, but not now. We have something more important than personal quarrels to settle to-night . . . Will you listen to me?"

"Let him speak," came from all over the hall as Richard held out his arms asking for their answer.

Tony shrugged his shoulders, and sullenly resumed his seat.

"What Tony says is Gospel truth," Richard began without preliminaries. "The management of this company . . . and by that I mean my own father . . . has always looked upon labor as a commodity, to be bought and sold like any other, and subject to the same laws of demand and supply. He is not alone in that attitude, and what we as workmen do now ought to be an object lesson for every great industrial plant in America."

"Good stuff!" some one in the audience shouted. "We'll show 'em that we are the people!"

"What these old-type managers fail to realize," Richard went on without regarding the interruption, "is that a workman can never be degraded to the level of a machine; that he has a personality which goes into his work; and that it is this personality which establishes the quality of his product."

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"What's all this got to do with the strike?" demanded Tony, made uneasy by the attention the workers were giving to the speaker.

"Shut up!" . . . "Let him talk" . . . the men retorted.

"Until the war shook things up, the wages of labor were too low," Richard continued, . . . "since then, they have advanced to a point beyond what can be maintained. Labor must never again accept the old conditions. The higher wages have given the working-people a taste of greater things, and they require an increased income to gratify their new-born desires. On the other hand, labor will destroy the advantage it has now gained if it insists on a wage-scale so high that employers cannot produce commodities at a price at which they can be sold. The management of the Norton Manufacturing Company is undertaking to establish a scale which will meet present conditions. What they suggest may be right and it may not. We are entitled to know whether it is fair. A wage-scale is a vital matter, in which employer and employed have a common interest, and neither one has the right to establish it without conference with the other. I believe that one of the things we fought for in this war was to establish a new basis . . . a fair one . . . for the working-class; and that cannot be arrived at unless each side considers the necessities of the other. Neither Labor nor Capital must forget its inter-dependence."

"Watch him! He's tryin' to slip somethin' over on us!" Tony yelled, but Richard gave no heed either to him or the cries of protest against the interruption.

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He was fired by his subject and overjoyed that the audience would listen to him.

"What I want to see now is not a fight simply to resist wage reduction. That may or may not accomplish what we have in mind, but at best it means doing it all over again every time a difference arises between us and the management. Now is the time to establish the fact that the workers are an integral part of every industrial concern, that they insist upon getting the share that rightfully belongs to them, that they are prepared to give proper return for this rightful share. Now is the time to show the world that Labor stands ready to recognize Capital as a co-partner and not as an enemy, putting the onus on Capital to refuse the co-partnership if it is unwilling to accept a fair basis of relationship."

Murmurs ran around the hall.

"What do you mean by giving proper return?" some one asked.

"Just what we demand from Capital," Richard shouted, turning toward the speaker. "In our pay envelopes we receive genuine money, one hundred cents on the dollar. How long would we stand for it if some of that money was counterfeit, or if we were short-changed? Yet every one of us knows that we are not giving the management one hundred per cent. value in the quality of our work, or sixty minutes' full capacity for every hour."

"It's a trick!" Tony yelled, jumping to his feet, and in various parts of the hall men were rising in protest against the speaker. But before the outbreak was

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sufficient to drown the voices, John Sibley, one of the ex-service men, stood on his chair, his stentorian tone rising above the clamor.

"Let him finish, men!" he cried. "He fought with us in France . . . He is fighting for us here . . . Let him finish what he has to say."

III

As the threatened outburst subsided, Richard resumed, but he spoke in a quieter, calmer tone which was even more effective.

"Yes, fellows; I fought with you in France. We are still fighting and must keep at it until the Prussianism of the industrial world is beaten. There is no trick underlying what I say, but we can't win unless we are ready to give as well as take. The future of the world depends upon production, and production rests in our hands. The conditions under which production shall be carried on will remain in our hands if what we ask is fair, and we enforce it by demanding no more than we are prepared to give. Capital has been unfair; Labor, with its newly-discovered power, is repeating the mistake Capital has made. If we are red-blooded men instead of machines, why do we limit our output, which in itself destroys our individuality? If we demand our full rights, are we honest if we show ourselves wasteful in our production?"

"What in hell has all this to do with the strike?" Tony demanded. "Are you in favor of striking or not?"

"I am," Richard retorted, "if we have to strike to secure our rights; and frankly I believe we will. But

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let us do it with intelligence, and not as a mob. Is the management justified in cutting wages? Have they made the profits we believe they have? Why have they decided to run short time?"

"Fine!" sneered Tony. "Go ask your papa those questions, and then come back and tell us!"

"It is not for me to ask except as your accredited representative, but it is for us to find out. We have a right to ask and a right to know. I have no idea that the management will tell us. If they do not, then the responsibility for what happens is theirs. I propose that a committee be appointed to draw up a statement to the management, making a demand for representation in the running of the Company, through which we may know the authoritative answers to these questions, and to all others which may arise. Let us make it clear that at all times we insist upon receiving as wages our full share of the return from our efforts, at the same time granting Capital and Management a similarly fair return. If our demand for this representation is granted, and it probably will not be, then let the first duty of our representatives be to discover whether this wage-cut is warranted, and govern ourselves accordingly. If it is warranted then a return to prosperous conditions will come quicker if we recognize it, and this prosperity will automatically restore our present wages or increase them. If this demand for representation be denied, then let us strike to enforce not merely the present question, but the bigger, basic principle which when won will give us our full share, and will guarantee permanent prosperity."

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Richard took no part in the turmoil which followed his speech. Returning to his seat in the midst of the uproar, he listened to the harangues made by Tony and the younger radical element of the union in answer to remarks of the older men who were interested in Richard's suggestions. That he was concerned in the outcome was shown by the tenseness of his expression, and the sharp, penetrating glances he shot at the men around him, trying to read their minds.

IV

That John Sibley had stood as his champion was of peculiar significance to Richard, for he was one of those ex-service boys who came back from heroic deeds over-seas with the idea that their work was finished. Sibley was as splendid an example of young American manhood as one would wish to see. Fired to a burst of patriotism by his country's call to arms, he enlisted as a private and fought his way to glory and a captaincy. He made an enviable record, and deserved the hysterical welcome home given to those first returning troops. Every one looked upon him as a hero, and he saw no reason to disagree with them . . . Then came the disillusioning. His old position in the factory was given back to him. That was good enough for John Sibley, private, but far beneath the dignity of Captain John Sibley. Why should he not be advanced in civilian life as he had been in the army? This ambition was laudable, and might have been attained if he had attacked his work with the ferocity he showed when he fought the Boches; but that the fault lay

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at his door never occurred to him. In his own eyes he was still a hero, now neglected, and he was forever looking and waiting for that applause which was so ominously lacking. The world was unappreciative and against him! This made grievances easy to find.

If Richard's conception of the new industrial relations appealed to a man of the Sibley type there must be something in it beyond an expression of idealism. If, through it, industry could receive the benefit of the best that men like Sibley could contribute, success was assured. Should his efforts fail, Richard felt that his last interest in anything would disappear; if he won, then the flame ignited in France still flared, translated into living practicality. If the great common cause still survived beneath the *débris* of deadening non-essentials, he need no longer fear that he was on the outside of the world, for he could again buckle on the armor of the Crusader and make himself a part of that world. What wonder that he felt himself on trial!

V

It was a small thing that turned the verdict in the closest and most bitter fight the Norcross union ever passed through. Tony's impassioned tirades held together the rabid members, but they would have voted with him under any circumstances. There were enough of the conservative element to outvote the others if they could be united. The speeches of Alec Sterling, the stolid superintendent of the works, and John Sibley helped to do this; but it was little Olga Mirovich who won over the doubtful balance of power.

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"Hell!" she cried at the top of her voice, climbing onto an upturned packing-case. "You are making a lot of fuss over nothing. Let us appoint the committee as Mr. Richard Norton asks us to do. They will get nothing but the door when they see the boss, and then we can have the strike any way. That will satisfy every one, and the bug will be on the boss!"

VI

The committee was appointed, with Richard its chairman, and Tony Lemholtz left the meeting with but the tattered shreds of his former power. A new labor leader had arisen in Norcross.

CHAPTER X

I

A FORTNIGHT had passed since the afternoon when Lola exhorted Richard to remain true to his idealism by translating his vision into action. During those days which had been so eventful in Richard's life she had received no word from him, so she could only conclude that in spite of her hopefulness she had failed to arouse him beyond temporary interest. What could she do to bring him to a realization of her devotion to him? What could she say which would apply the spark necessary for his complete understanding? She wished that she might bring herself to believe with Richard that their marriage would supply him with a continued inspiration to strive for his ideal; but knowing him, and feeling sure that possession would remove the only incentive, she was sure that his salvation lay in her steadfast adherence to the position she had taken.

Rumors came and went as to labor troubles at the plant, but there was nothing to associate Richard's name with them until Treadway dropped in for an afternoon cup of tea. After his usual desultory conversation, the caller broached the subject on which Lola was

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most anxious to receive news and which she most dreaded to approach.

"Have you seen Dick lately?" he inquired suddenly.

"Not . . . for a few days," she replied, unwilling to admit how long it had really been.

"Dick doesn't have much time for his social duties now," Treadway went on smoothly. "I suppose you know he's turned red?"

"Turned red?" Lola repeated. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, bolshevist, labor agitator, socialist, . . . all that sort of thing, you know. Too bad, isn't it, a fine chap like Dick?"

"Tell me about it," she urged, manifesting an interest which stimulated her companion.

"Why, I thought every one knew . . ."

Treadway blew a cloud of cigarette smoke in front of him.

"Had an awful row with his father, you know, told him how he ought to run his business, threatened him with all sorts of calamities if he didn't change his methods, left the family roof and fig tree, and now he's living in a tenement down near the plant."

Lola wondered. Did this mean that Richard had received another blow, or that he himself had struck one? Much might have happened during that fortnight. Had these days disclosed to him the direction in which his opportunity lay, or had this break with his father supplied the final evidence that the world was hopelessly askew? Lola suffered from the suspense.

"Poor Dick!" she exclaimed sympathetically. "I am

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so sorry! No one knows what that boy has gone through since he came home!"

"I'll say it must have gone to his head, if you ask me," Treadway explained. "Dick was all right before the war. Must have got shell-shock or something like that, don't you think?"

"I don't believe those who stayed at home can understand just what is the matter with Dick," Lola remarked quietly; but Treadway felt the sting.

"Don't knock," he protested. "You know I would have gone if I hadn't been necessary to an essential industry."

"Some felt they were necessary to an essential war."

"Oh, you're trying to make me feel uncomfortable, Lola, but you can't do it. Perhaps you might have, a year ago, but all that hurrah boys stuff has gone into the discard now. I did my part, and my conscience is clear. Unlike Nathan Hale, my only regret is that I have but one life to *live* for my country . . . Now don't be unfair to me."

Lola held back the reply which was on her lips. Treadway's "war-service" had always been a sore point with her, but there was nothing to be gained by raising it now. Besides, she wanted to learn of Richard.

"Tell me about Dick," she urged . . . "I interrupted you."

"Oh, yes," Treadway assented cheerfully; glad to turn the conversation upon a more agreeable subject. "He's thrown young Lemholtz out of the saddle as labor leader, and jumped in himself. Clever, I'll admit, but it is too bad for Dick to do it, isn't it? The old

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man is quite upset, you know. Can't blame him for that, can we?"

Treadway's obvious delight in being the harbinger of such tidings was mortifying, for the fact that she had not already learned the news from Richard himself was an admission of altered conditions. But there was nothing now to conceal, and she must know all that Treadway could tell her.

"Of course, it is terrible for Dick and his father to have a break," Lola said with real feeling, . . . "each of them needs the other so much. But I don't understand yet just what has happened."

"I'll explain. The men were going to make all sorts of demands, and Dick has put them up to some they never thought of before, . . . factory representation and all that sort of thing. They have made him chairman or something of the kind of their committee, and he insists on seeing the entire Board of Directors. Not the General Manager, if you please, but the entire Board of Directors! What do you think of that? Why, his father is still frothing at the mouth!"

"What are the demands he is going to make?" she inquired, striving to conceal her real interest.

These were not the acts of a despairing man! Could it be that her exhortation was beginning to bear fruit?

"Oh, yes," Treadway replied; . . . "that is, I can tell you some of them. He . . ."

"Suppose you let me answer Lola's question myself."

"Oh, Dick!" the girl cried, rising and holding out her hand to him impulsively; "where did you drop from?"

"Sorry to interrupt," he said, looking steadily at

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Treadway. "I came up the north steps. Treadway has apparently told you all the news, but perhaps I can supply some of the details. I'll wait for you inside."

"Oh, I must be going," Treadway exclaimed, rising hastily in his embarrassment. "Promised to meet the boys at the club, and I'm late now. So long."

II

Lola led the way into the house. There was a great joy in her face as she looked up into his from the huge chair into which she threw herself. She needed no word from him to know that at last the spark had kindled into flame. It mattered little where or how, . . the fact was obvious.

"I don't know how much Treadway has told you, . ." Richard began.

"Never mind what he said. I want to know it all from the beginning."

"Well," he began, "first of all, I want to tell you how sorry I am that I am to be a disappointment to you, just as I have been to my father."

Lola sobered.

"Oh, Dick! I cannot believe that! When I saw your face I was sure that at last you had found yourself."

"I have, Lola, but not the way you expected . . . And truly, I did want to please you, dear! Things have moved so fast since I saw you that I could not even get here to tell you about them. There is going to be trouble at the plant and apparently I am to be in the thick of it."

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Then he told her in detail of the heated discussion with his father, of his work with the men, of the struggle with Tony Lemholtz, and his final victory over the radicals. Lola could scarcely believe that this was the same Richard. The pall of discouragement had fallen from him; there was purpose in every word, authority and decision in every motion.

"Have you an idea that your father will even consider such a proposition as you suggest?" Lola asked as he paused.

"Not a chance," Richard acknowledged. "If the settlement of the present situation is left to him it means hardship for the men and bankruptcy for the business. That is why I am trying to go over his head. I want a chance to show the Directors just what this thing means, and I can't do that to a man who won't even listen to me. Your father could be a wonderful help, Lola. The way he talked the other day makes me think he might be sympathetic. Will you help me win him over?"

"Of course I'll help, Dick."

"It is going to be a tremendous proposition to put across, but it's worth a fight, isn't it? Think, Lola, what it would mean! Employers and employed working together as partners, . . . the energy now wasted by each in fighting the other concentrated on production, . . . all animated by a common interest, sharing in a common prosperity! It is so logical if each will recognize the other's importance to himself, and cease trying to get more than his share."

He was so consumed by the excitement of having a

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new world open before him that he actually trembled. As Lola listened to him a great joy came into her heart.

"Why did you think that this would be a disappointment to me?" she asked quietly.

"You had your heart so set on that vision of mine."

She looked at him to make sure that he was serious. What a big, blessed, lovable idiot the boy was!

"Why, Dick!" she cried, "this is your vision! Don't you realize it? The voice has come! You have accepted the call."

He looked at her in complete bewilderment for a moment; then a new light came into his face, culminating in a radiant smile.

"I believe you are right! Lola, . . I really believe you are right! It is the same thing, isn't it?"

"Of course it is, Dick. It is making a practical application of the idealism which meant so much to you in France. What more could you possibly ask?"

Even now the realization of the fact was almost beyond him, but the truth could not be denied.

"I knew that you could do it, Dick!" Lola declared. "It was worth a little misunderstanding, wasn't it? It was worth waiting for. I knew that you could not feel as you had and then slip back. That was what I was trying to make you see, dear. Will you forgive me for seeming to be unkind?"

But Richard's thoughts were too firmly centered upon the opportunity he saw before him to recognize the personal appeal which the girl's words contained.

"Why, it is even bigger than anything I ever thought of in France, isn't it?" he exclaimed joyfully. "It is so

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big that we can't expect to do more than make a start, but if I can even do that I shall be satisfied. If the American Legion would only throw its weight to force the issue nothing could stop it. This is just the kind of constructive work they ought to do. The Legion was formed 'to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and good-will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom, and democracy.' Its members, pledged to these articles of incorporation are to be found among the employers and the employed. Industrial peace means production, and production means the solution of the world's problem today."

"Oh, Dick!" Lola cried, fired by his enthusiasm. "If that could only be spread over the country, over the world! Isn't there some little way I could help?"

"Of course, Lola," he answered with unconscious patronage, oblivious to the part she had already played; "but I particularly need your father. I also need every one who can see beyond himself and his own petty little personal interests. For the struggle will not be with Capital alone. The labor organizations are handicapped by those who think only of themselves. The mass of the workers are honest and sincere in seeking a fair return for their efforts, and are willing to give a full equivalent. Those who influence them to do otherwise are traitors to their own brothers, and must be weeded out. But they'll fight, and by confusing the real issue will divide the men and endanger our success."

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"You have your own men back of you . . ."

"Only partially. Tony Lemholtz and his radicals are against me from the start. Sterling and the conservatives are with me. Little Olga Mirovich is my right-hand man. I don't know what I'd do without her."

Richard was too obsessed by his subject to notice the expression which passed over Lola's face, so her question surprised him.

"Is Olga only a right-hand man, Dick?" she asked pointedly. "Olga is a woman, and a very pretty one."

Richard looked at her a moment and then laughed.

"If I didn't know you so well, Lola, I'd think you were jealous! No; there's nothing like that. Olga and I have a big common interest, but aside from that the child simply amuses me."

"She is no child, Dick," Lola said gravely, . . . "and people are talking."

A wave of angry color surged through Richard's face.

"They're talking, are they? Well . . . let them talk! There's nothing between Olga and me which isn't thoroughly respectable, even measured by standards you and I know are stupid. Until the world learns the difference between essentials and non-essentials, and to mind its own business, people will waste their breath like that. A man's life is made up of his work and his pleasures. It's clear to me now what my work is to be; my pleasures I will pluck as I can, for there are to be few enough for me at best . . . Cheer up, O mentor o'mine! I'm feeling very happy today, . . .

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*'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying,
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying,'"*

he quoted irrelevantly. "Let's talk of real things."

"Can't we talk a little about ourselves, Dick?" she began. "Surely that is real. I haven't seen you for nearly two weeks."

"That subject is taboo, Lola," was the quick answer. "It leads to but one conclusion, and that you've asked me to avoid."

"But suppose . . ."

"I have come to see things your way, Lola," Richard went on. "It hasn't been easy, but I've brought myself to believe that you are right in saying that neither one of us is ready yet to think of marriage. What you said is true: we must prove ourselves faithful to what the war taught us before we earn the right to consider ourselves. The men seem to think that I can lead them. This may be the call you spoke of, which you urged me not to ignore. I will try to live up to the best there is in me, Lola, and I am satisfied, now that I realize that this is what you want me to do."

III

Lola let him leave her without further protest. While in this mood, it was useless for her to explain to him that since their last conversation circumstances had removed the single obstacle to their marriage. What Richard said showed how little he understood the pur-

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pose of her insistence . . . had he found himself earlier there would have been no need of postponement. Today she not only stood ready but was as eager as he had been for the union which would permit them to work out their problem jointly, . . but now Richard saw in their marriage a hindrance to his plans. He seemed to feel that he had simply fallen in with her ideas, when in reality he had established a new basis of his own. The situation had taken an unexpected turn, and she must think it out . . . Had his intimacy with Olga been a factor in his decision? . . . People said . . .

"I am just like every one else," Lola declared to herself, indignant that she had permitted her thoughts to run along this line, . . "How can I ever expect to accomplish anything with others if I am so inconsistent myself?"

CHAPTER XI

I

IT MUST not be supposed that Henry Cross dropped out of town affairs after his historic battle with James Norton over the baptismal name. On the contrary, Norton would have told you with some degree of feeling that Henry Cross was distressingly omnipresent. The Cross ancestry went back in too direct a line in New England genealogy to make it possible for the present family head to accept an eclipse without enforcing a price which should be felt in the paying. James Norton had been the shadow which had blotted out the disk of Henry Cross's sun, and for twenty years the offended Dorian had quietly but effectively enforced almost daily reprisals. Let Norton undertake to secure a coveted piece of land, and it would develop that Cross had anticipated him or the price had doubled; let him, as president, propose any action for the bank, and Cross, as director, straightway and as a matter of principle put himself in opposition. If a Norcrossian made an enemy of James Norton by that act he became a friend of Henry Cross. The other citizens of the town recognized the antagonism and enjoyed it, a favorite form of salutation being, "What's the latest

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about Norton and Cross?" The historic Kentucky feuds perhaps contained more shooting and dramatics, but no more honest hatred.

II

When the armistice with Germany was declared, James Norton, in common with other far-sighted executives, made definite plans for curtailing production and reducing expenses; but contrary to his expectations the demand increased rather than diminished, and the question was how to meet it rather than how to maintain it. Labor made new demands and was in a position to enforce them. James Norton shook his head ominously, but to his amazement the consumer offered no objection to the increased prices, his only anxiety being lest his orders could not be filled. This condition continued month after month, until the manufacturer came to regard the abnormal as normal, and the laborer believed his marvelously increased stipend to be assured for all time. What had been looked upon as luxuries became necessities, and society had to change its classifications. The first stratum and the most arrogant was now the working class; the second included the manufacturers, somewhat less assuming, but possessing no lack of self-respect; and the third, a new creation, were the *nouveaux pauvres*, those gentle folk who before the war received a sufficient income from their investments in stocks and bonds to meet their varying demands of living. These unfortunate creatures in the third class found themselves between the Scylla of re-

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duced or vanished dividends and the Charybdis of enormously increased expenses and income taxes.

Then, without warning, came the economic condition for which the manufacturers had earlier prepared but later ignored. The buying public struck. As if business had been cut in two by a gigantic cleaver, orders in hand were suddenly canceled and new orders ceased. Before the industrial world grasped the fact that the reaction had actually arrived the enormous profits yielded by war prices had been wiped out by the continuing high cost of labor, which could no longer be passed on to the consumer, and by inventories of materials purchased at top prices and daily shrinking to lower values which meant appalling losses. James Norton was but one of the many executives who found themselves face to face with the greatest business crisis of their lives.

III

All this produced a condition for which Henry Cross had been patiently waiting for twenty years. The accumulated fortune of the Cross family was divided into three classes, . . . land, mortgages, and government securities. The life-long principle of Henry Cross had been to keep a sufficient amount of his property in liquid form so that he could always gratify his quiet passion for bargains. This might take the form of a neat little farm whose owner found himself embarrassed through ill-luck or poor management, or Liberty Bonds ten to fifteen points below par. Cross never purchased a share of stock in the market, yet he lacked

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no opportunity to make use of his native genius as a speculator. He would have told you that he "traded" sometimes, but never speculated. He bought only when the other man wanted to sell, and his business discussions were brief and to the point.

"You are the one asking me to buy, aren't you?" he would demand at the first symptom of an argument. "That's what I'll give you for it. Take it or leave it."

But in any man's scheme of life there are always exceptions, and in this case there were two: every share of stock in the Norcross National Bank which changed hands interested Henry Cross from a buyer's standpoint, and during the last two years he had invested heavily in the commercial paper of the Norton Manufacturing Company. No one but his agent knew of these departures from his life-long practice, but share by share he came nearer to a controlling interest in the bank, and month by month increased his holdings of Norton's notes, waiting patiently for the inflated business airship to make its enforced landing. When that happened something told him there would be a bump.

The Cross household included Mrs. Cross and Miss Sarah Cross, Henry's maiden sister. For over thirty-five years it had seen no changes except in the alterations in the house itself occasioned by the addition of material improvements as they came to be necessities. The telephone had been the greatest struggle, but Henry Cross had no intention of permitting any one in Norcross to possess what he lacked, so the instrument was installed, even though for over a year after its instal-

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lation no out-going calls were registered against it. It was an harmonious household with but a single mind, and that mind was Henry Cross's. The women had two distinct interests in life, . . Henry Cross and the Congregational Church, the first from habit and the second from inheritance. The Calvinistic doctrines had come to the Cross family in direct line from Jonathan Edwards. Such topics as original sin, bondage of the will, predestination, and the creation were still discussed with as much familiarity and enthusiasm as other families manifest today in baseball scores and rival types of automobiles. Where on some walls would hang a photograph of Theodore Roosevelt a visitor might observe an ancient sampler carrying the words, "In Adam's fall we sinned all." There was no compromise with wrong in the hearts of the Cross women, but their less righteous neighbors, who considered them strait-laced and bigoted, were scarcely warranted in saying that Sarah even blew her nose on high moral principles. Under these circumstances the routine of the Cross household possessed little variety, and there had been no thrill since the west end of the house caught fire ten years before.

"Henry," said Mrs. Cross to her husband when he returned to the house late one afternoon, "we've got to do something about that dog."

"Killed another cat, has he?"

"Yes; I'm getting a regular cemetery of cats out in the garden. If you can tell me why that dog pays no attention to cats on week-days and kills one and fetches it home every Sunday, I'd like to know."

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"Takes 'em for heretics, I guess." Henry chuckled over his joke. "He can't drop his weekly donation into the contribution box on the Sabbath, so he brings it to you, Martha."

"He's awful vindictive about it. Even after he's killed 'em, he shakes 'em 'til it makes me sick."

"Probably wants to prove to 'em that there's punishment after death."

"What's got into you, Henry Cross," she demanded, "to make you so 'specially chipper and good-natured tonight?"

"Nothing to speak of," he disclaimed; "just trying to be cheerful, I suppose."

Mrs. Cross, however, was not to be diverted, and repeated her observations to her sister-in-law.

"We'll know in time," Sarah replied philosophically. "Henry won't open his mouth until he gets good and ready, so there isn't any use in wondering."

During supper Henry's good spirits continued. Mrs. Cross found it difficult to follow Sarah's advice, for her curiosity still flourished with undiminished vigor even though other personal characteristics had weakened from a hardening of the ideas.

"Land's sakes, Henry!" she exclaimed at length, "aren't you going to tell us what has happened? I haven't seen you so chipper for years."

Henry Cross chuckled to himself.

"I am feeling pretty good," he admitted; "but there isn't much to talk about . . . yet."

"You aren't going to leave us hung up like that, are you?"

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"I'll tell you all in good time . . . I'd like some more of those beans."

"Henry Cross!" The gentle spouse gave evidence of being annoyed. "It isn't Christian for you to aggravate us like this. Don't you agree with me, sister?"

"What is the use of agreeing?" Sarah asked with resignation. "You know Henry."

"Well," he said slowly, "it isn't any secret as I know of, but I haven't much to tell . . . yet. I am going over to call on James Norton after supper."

"Henry Cross!" Martha ejaculated, and then subsided into inarticulate suspense.

The thrill had come. If Henry Cross had anticipated the pleasure of creating a dramatic moment he could ask for nothing more. Martha looked at Sarah and Sarah looked at Martha, while both looked at Henry, and the silence was filled with tense excitement. Henry tried to appear unconcerned as he ate his beans, but his enjoyment of the situation was far greater than his gastronomic satisfaction.

There are few shocks, however violent, from which those affected do not ultimately recover. At length Sarah found her voice.

"Has James Norton invited you without including us?"

"Oh, no; nothing social . . . nothing social," he hastened to reassure his sister.

"Are you going to James Norton's house of your own free will?" Martha demanded incredulously.

"Yes," Henry acknowledged; "I am. As a matter of fact, Norton doesn't know I'm coming."

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"Merciful man!"

This was the most extravagant expression of profanity ever heard in the Cross household, and its use evidenced the high moral tension.

"You don't mean to say that you are going to make up with that . . . that . . ."

"Don't get excited," Henry interrupted soothingly. "Didn't the minister in his sermon yesterday tell us to forgive our enemies?"

"That was a quotation from the Scriptures, Henry Cross, and you know it. The Scriptures were written long before James Norton was born or there would have been a special exception made to cover his case."

"Why, Martha!" Henry thoroughly enjoyed his wife's wrath when directed against his rival, and proceeded to encourage it. "What has James Norton ever done to get you so down on him?"

"Done? You ask me what he's done when there hasn't been a day these last twenty years I haven't heard you say something mean against him! And now you're going to make up with him after all these years of hating him! If you hadn't been a Christian all your life, Henry Cross, I'd say you were getting a sudden experience of religion and an awful dose of it!"

Sarah had been watching her brother's face and was able to detect what Martha's excitement had caused her to overlook.

"Can't you see he's making sport of you, Martha? Henry Cross never flopped like that in all his natural life."

"Then he has no right to treat me like a child."

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Martha's eyes filled with tears of mortification.

"There, there," her husband soothed her; "everybody has to have his little joke. I have an idea that my call will cause Mr. James Norton the utmost astonishment."

"I should think it might," Martha dried her tears; "it certainly has me. Why don't you tell us all about it?"

"Never like to count my chickens before they're hatched, but I will tell you this, Martha, . ." Henry Cross's face hardened as his wife had seldom seen it before, . . "I've got James Norton now where I can handle him, and it has taken me twenty years to do it!"

CHAPTER XII

I

RICHARD was waylaid by Barry as he was leaving the house. What Lola had told him about the contentment her *protégé* had found gave Dick a new interest in him. Until then he had looked upon the one-legged man as a bit of flotsam cast up by the war, more fortunate than most because he had fallen among sympathetic and understanding friends, but still a pitiable object because necessarily the recipient of charity.

Nothing so exasperated Richard or caused so severe a shock to his patriotism as the failure of his own government to provide promptly and efficiently for the care of those who had given themselves to their country's service. No other nation proved itself so liberal in its provisions for the disabled soldiers; no other nation, through legislative and administrative deficiencies, so failed to make those provisions available. It seemed incredible to Richard that an intelligent government should fail to appreciate the fact that in the rehabilitation of the disabled soldier the three important needs . . . medical treatment, vocational training, and financial support . . . were the simultaneous neces-

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sities of one man and not of three different men, or of one man at three different times. The lack of vision and foresight in our preparation seemed indefensible to him when we had before us the experience of other nations, and of our own nation in previous wars. The delayed start made by our government and its lack of conception of the magnitude of the problem, resulting in so much unnecessary suffering for the disabled veterans, appeared to Richard as nothing less than criminal, and he was eager to call some one strictly to account.

Richard was among the leaders in the American Legion to force home to a government clogged by red tape, administrative chaos, duplication, and wasted energy and conflict, the fact that thousands of these men were waiting and had been waiting for months for compensation for their injuries; that other thousands had waited at least as long for an opportunity to re-establish themselves as sustaining members of society by vocational training; that still other thousands were in need of hospital care with no hospital facilities available; that afflicted and penniless veterans had been driven to refuge in almshouses and jails; that hundreds were still the unwilling objects of public and private charity.

To find one of these men, like Barry, who had been able to rise above the supineness of governmental delay and work out his own individual solution, was an event of no little interest to Richard. Lola had told him how all bitterness had disappeared, and that Barry O'Carolan's experiences had really made of him a phil-

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osopher. This Richard could scarcely believe, and he was glad of this first opportunity to satisfy his doubts.

II

Barry always saluted Richard. The army had given him his only social training, and in recognizing the difference in their positions Barry knew no other form of expression.

"If you're not in too much of a hurry, Capt'n, I'd like to speak to you about Jack Munsey."

Munsey was a Norcross disabled veteran to whom Barry had been drawn by the similarity of their afflictions, for Munsey's right leg had been amputated just below the hip; but his condition was more serious owing to tuberculosis contracted from exposure in the service.

"How is Munsey? . . . poor chap!" Richard inquired.

"He died last night, Capt'n, . . and that's what I want to speak to you about."

"Died!" Richard exclaimed. "Oh, I should have gone down to see him, but I have been so tied up with this labor trouble! Had his War Risk payments come through?"

Barry shook his head.

"No; that's what hurts. Jack died cursin' out the gov'ment."

Richard drew in his breath sharply.

"John Sibley and I are tryin' to raise enough money to bury him," Barry went on, "and I thought p'raps

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you'd like to help. It can all be paid back when the checks do come in."

"I'll pay the whole of it," Richard declared vehemently, . . . "and to hell with the checks!"

"We wouldn't want you to do that, Capt'n. I and some of his other friends would like to have a share in it, but we can't do it all."

"You can't afford it, Barry . . ."

"Oh, yes; I can." Barry smiled. "I'm makin' enough now to support myself, and when the gov'ment gets 'round to send me my checks I'll be rich! I suppose they'll do it some time."

"How far behind were they with Jack?"

"Eight months, Capt'n. I sent 'em a telegram last week, 'Please hurry Jack Munsey's checks so he can sign 'em before he dies to pay for funeral,' but I guess it just made 'em laugh in Washington. They prob'ly thought I was kiddin' 'em. But it does hurt to hear a chap like Jack curse out his own gov'ment, don't it, Capt'n?"

"Barry," Richard said, controlling himself and placing one hand on his companion's shoulder, "don't get me started, for things like this make me see red. Thank God we're near the end of this administration which plays politics while men like Jack Munsey die in poverty!"

"But we mustn't lose faith in our country, must we, Capt'n? The trouble isn't with our country. We wouldn't ask anythin' better than a chance to fight for her again, would we, Capt'n?"

Richard looked at Barry admiringly,

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"If you can say that after the way you've been treated, and what you've seen of the neglect of other disabled boys, I'll say so; but I wouldn't have agreed to that five minutes ago. Don't you ever complain of your experiences?"

Barry smiled sheepishly.

"I wouldn't like to have you ask Miss Lola that," he said. "You should have heard me rave in her hospital! But my case was a joke. As long as I had lost a leg, they thought they knew what to do with me, so I was shipped out to Seattle to be made a master mechanic by the Vocational Board. I'm afraid I wouldn't have lasted long indoors, but I had the luck to get the flu. Then I couldn't work, so the Vocational Board turned me back to the army, but the army didn't have any appropriation to take care of me, and they sure were embarrassed. After waitin' a couple of months for 'em to decide what to do next, I hocked my overcoat and watch and beat it for Miss Lola. You see I was in luck all the way through."

"Yes," Richard acknowledged, with a curious expression on his face; "you were surely in luck all the way through, . . and particularly when you fell into Miss Lola's hands."

"That's it," Barry cried eagerly. "She understands. And say, Capt'n, Miss Lola's been through just as much as any of us. She's a real veteran all right, and she ought to wear stripes on her arm, . . only her wounds aren't where you can see 'em."

Richard looked up quickly.

"I'm doin' all I can to pay her back for what she

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did for me," Barry hurried on; "but it's too big a job for me to swing alone. If you could see her face sometimes, Capt'n, with the tears just glistenin' in her eyes, it would bring a lump in your throat just as it does in mine. When any one outside the family comes 'round she bucks up, so p'raps you haven't noticed it. Bein' so fond of her as I know you are, I thought p'raps you wouldn't mind my speakin' of it."

"You're a good old scout, Barry." Richard clapped him on the shoulder. "You keep right on watching over Miss Lola while I'm kept busy with the men at the plant. After that's settled, we'll join forces and see what we can do to bring the roses back to her cheeks and the laughter to her eyes . . . Let me know how much I may stand on the expenses for Jack . . . Poor chap! Good night, Barry."

III

After watching Richard stride off, Barry hobbled back toward the house. He was fortunate enough to discover the object of his search, for Lola was leaning against a pillar of the *loggia*, watching the brilliancy of the setting sun. But whatever her eyes might see, whatever her resolutions, her thoughts were still centered upon Richard. He could not realize how cruel he had been to her. It was she who had forced him into the very position which now gave him such satisfaction, yet he seemed so blissfully unconscious of it that whatever credit there was to give went to this factory-girl, whose name was already too intimately associated with his. In Richard's emancipation she had touched the

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heights, but only for a moment; the aftermath was almost more than she could bear . . . It was Lola the women rather than Lola the war-worker who leaned against the pillar.

As Barry approached her she turned toward him and smiled consciously.

"Isn't it beautiful?"

"Yes, Miss Lola. There's an awful lot of beautiful things in this world if you know where to look for 'em, and if you keep on lookin' for 'em you don't have time to worry about the ugly ones. The real job is to keep on lookin', isn't it, Miss Lola?"

"Yes, Barry; and that is a real job, as you say. Sometimes I feel that I've done nothing but look since I came home, and that I have found nothing."

"You haven't found anythin' beautiful, Miss Lola?" he asked, surprise and disappointment showing in his voice.

"I don't mean quite that," she explained. "When you spoke of the beautiful things in the world you didn't mean the beauty of the sunset or of the flowers. These are wonderful, of course, but the beauties I have looked for and failed to find are those of human life, . . . unselfishness, appreciation, helpfulness, and sympathy. I came home, Barry, full of eagerness to carry on right here in Norcross the work I had learned to do over there. I knew the need existed, and believed the opportunity would be waiting for me."

"I guess you found both the need and the opportunity all right . . ."

"Yes, Barry; but not the co-operation or the un-

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derstanding. Why, even today I heard some one ask why the Red Cross had to carry on any more! The way the people responded to the war demands was magnificent; their failure to recognize the aftermath is disgraceful. I've wanted to go right back to France, Barry, where people understand!"

"I'm glad you didn't, Miss Lola," he said soberly; "but I suppose that's selfish, too. You and my wooden leg have made a man out of me, and there are lots of us boys here in Norcross who think you ought to have a colored glass window in the church; but of course in France you could have helped a lot more fellers like us. We're all selfish, Miss Lola, when it comes right down to ourselves, aren't we?"

"No, Barry, . ." she said emphatically. "If it hadn't been for you and the other boys, I should have gone back, but the fact that you needed me helped me to forget my disappointment. What you boys have done for me has been far more than anything I could ever do for you, but you don't need me now, and I'm wondering . . ."

"The Capt'n needs you . . . " he said unexpectedly.

Lola looked at him quickly. Her *protégé* was rapidly acquiring intuition.

"I don't believe he does, Barry," she replied quietly. "I think he has found himself now in his work with the men."

"But that never takes the place of what a woman can do, Miss Lola. I was just talkin' with the Capt'n . . ."

Lola's sudden look interrupted him.

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"Oh, no!" he exclaimed with quick comprehension; "you know I wouldn't speak of what we talked about. But we did speak of you . . . just casual like, . . . and say . . . the Capt'n sure does think a heap of you!"

"I hope so, Barry," Lola said simply, holding out her hand.

Barry seized it eagerly, and an expression came into his face which Lola had never seen there before.

"That's nothin' strange," he added in a low voice. "Any man who didn't would be blind in both eyes and wooden all over."

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CHAPTER XIII

I

WHENEVER James Norton's emotions were affected, his immediate reaction was to plunge more furiously into his work. Lately he had experienced a series of emotional shocks, and as a result his activities were correspondingly abnormal. His office hours, longer than those of any other employee of the Company, were crowded with hectic routine, which present-day executives delegate to subordinates. A manager in another business, who made the statement in his hearing that for a highly-paid executive to do any work which could be performed by one drawing a smaller salary was a waste of the company's money, incurred Norton's instant distrust. Except for his tremendous dynamic power, he could never have met the demands of his position with his days so clogged by minor details. As it was, the physical effort required to drive the machine over an uncharted route so pulled upon his vitality that, had he realized it, his capacity was needlessly impaired.

Norton had always done this. It was his idea of work, and he considered the modern notion that vacations and occasional afternoons at golf made a man more valuable to his business was the specious invention

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of sloths and idlers. His favorite boast was that he had never taken a vacation, and he failed to observe, so gradual came the transition in public opinion, that the earlier expression of wonder and approval on the part of his hearers was now rather that of pity or surprise.

"The world has gone crazy," he would tell Treadway, when his secretary reported that the head of some concern was "out of town" or "away on a vacation." "How they keep things going is beyond my understanding. They don't, that's all," he would say conclusively; "other people, who aren't afraid to work, are holding down their jobs for them. That's the answer . . . I don't see how they get away with it."

Now the office hours extended into the evening, and James Norton might be found at his desk in his library at home, carrying on the routine of his work with nothing changed but the surroundings. This was a trial to Treadway, for when his master's idiosyncracies deprived him of his own leisure for relaxation his enthusiastic approval of the Norton idea became somewhat modified. But it still served Treadway's purpose to play close to James Norton, so he uncomplainingly sacrificed whatever of his personal time was demanded, charging it off to profit and loss.

"All this is having a demoralizing influence on the younger men," Norton declared one evening when feeling particularly resentful . . . "they're getting where they think that anything to do with honest labor contaminates them. They'd rather talk about life being a representation of art and all that sort of thing."

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"Don't you think that is a phase which disappears after experience teaches them what they are really up against?"

"Yes, I do," the older man admitted; "but that doesn't keep it from being an additional obstacle to overcome in driving common-sense ideas into their heads . . . and there were obstacles enough before."

Treadway was delighted to match his mind against the master's, for such opportunities came but seldom. Norton rarely argued . . . usually he told him. The secretary's retentive mind supplied material absorbed from a recent lecture, but easily made his own for the purpose of the present discussion.

"Yet we must admit the value of leisure to our civilization," he contended, assuming the attitude of an oracle. "Leisure produces culture, and culture has interpreted man to man; it has explored the mind and rediscovered past explorations; it has developed scientists as well as artists, whose contribution to civilization has been to lay the foundation upon which were built the colossal minds which conceived the machines that rule the commercial world today."

Norton listened, highly amused.

"Who told you all that, Treadway? It sounds to me like a Lowell lecture . . . You expect me to disagree with you, but I don't. Everything you have just quoted is correct, but it stops short of facts. Always beware of half-truths, Treadway, . . . they're dangerous . . . Of course culture has played its part, but what could it have accomplished without commerce? It has been commercialism that has applied the wisdom

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of the ages toward the advancement of the welfare of mankind. Ask yourself where medicine and education and art and science would be today except for the millions of dollars contributed by men who contaminated themselves by work. I don't object to a man being an artist or a golf player if he wants to, provided he has earned the right to his leisure by hard work. What I don't like is to have him half business man and half loafer. Nearly every one who looks down on labor owes his present leisure to the contaminating but productive efforts of his ancestors. My code, Treadway, is that every man should be forced to make his contribution to society."

"I agree with you . . ."

"Of course you do! You can't fool me by getting off that half-baked, high-brow stuff that is all right as far as it goes, but always stops short of the practical. You are one of the few who have the right idea, Treadway. Work is the salvation of man, and he comes to his full development only through work. If I have taught you that lesson it will be worth more than all the money I ever paid you."

"My theory of life is to concentrate," Treadway acquiesced by repeating his favorite slogan, . . . "work while I work and play while I play."

"That's all right so long as you keep the proportion well on the side of work," the master agreed; "but work itself is play if you go at it right, . . . don't forget that. That is why I never took up these new-fangled ideas. Leisure bores me. You don't find these evenings here at the house very hard work, eh, Treadway? Change

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of scene, chance to smoke and relax, opportunity to learn more about the business, . . . couldn't ask for much better play than that, could you?"

Then a cloud passed over the old man's face.

"This is where Richard ought to be this minute," he muttered, "learning the business and helping his father."

"Do you think it would be a good idea if I were to have a talk with Richard?" Treadway asked, confident that his suggestion would never be accepted. "Perhaps, being about his age, I could approach him from his own standpoint and bring him to our way of thinking."

"You change Richard!" Norton demanded incredulously. "There would be more chance of his converting you! Richard has more brains in his head than any youngster in the plant, Treadway, if he'd only make a proper use of them. No, you're not in Richard's class. You're more comfortable to have around, . . . you probably wouldn't be if you were as smart as he is . . . Come, we're wasting a lot of valuable time."

Treadway's face flushed, but he made no retort to his master's uncomplimentary estimate of his capacity. Some time, perhaps, James Norton might find occasion to change his opinion.

II

Later in the evening Hannah announced Mr. Henry Cross. Norton could not believe his ears.

"Sure you got that name right, Hannah?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir; it's Mr. Henry Cross all right."

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"What is that hypocrite doing here," he exclaimed, more to himself than to Treadway, "away from his Bibles and bargains? Show him in . . . show him in . . ."

Norton waved his hand, and Hannah noiselessly departed.

The master's eye did not return to the papers on the desk before him, but remained fixed on the door through which his caller must enter. The suspense was not of long duration, but Treadway had a fairly definite idea of what was passing through his chief's mind. Even for a moment after Cross stood before the well-littered desk, the two men glared at each other without speaking. It was Norton who broke the silence.

"This is an honor I hadn't expected," he said crisply. "If it's a social call, I'll get up and treat you as a guest ought to be treated; if it isn't, you may stand or sit, as you choose, and state your business."

Henry Cross took no offence at the brusque reception. He drew a chair closer to the desk and seated himself with marked deliberation.

"This is a business call," he admitted; "and I should have thought I was in the wrong pew if you'd shown any civility."

With these preliminaries over, the two men again glared, each waiting for the other to say something. This time Cross took the initiative.

"My business is fairly personal," he announced, glancing significantly at Treadway.

"Go ahead with it. My secretary is familiar with my personal affairs."

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Cross shrugged his shoulders.

"As you like," he commented genially. "I generally cut out the Man Fridays when I discuss private matters. But it is your affair."

"It is," Norton snapped. "Get down to business. Can't you see that you're interrupting me?"

"Sorry," Cross apologized.

Then he shifted his legs and meditated for a moment.

"Want to sell your bank stock?" he asked abruptly.

"My bank stock? What are you talking about? It is not for sale, and you know it."

Again Cross shrugged his shoulders imperturbably.

"Thought you might, that's all. I've taken a fancy to that bank stock, and I come pretty close to holding the control. A little block of yours would give it to me. Then I could elect myself president, as you did, and sit in that office with all the mahogany fixings, and feel I really was somebody."

"You're crazy, man!" Norton cried, trying to fathom the motive which lay behind the apparent frankness of the statement Cross made. Norton and Stewart held the control of the bank stock, so he cared little who owned the balance, but Henry Cross was not a man to make such a fool proposition without something in the back of his head.

"I'm not an idiot," Norton continued, "and I give you credit for having some common sense. What's the idea of making me a proposition you know can't be put through?"

"I'm not so sure it can't."

"Well, I am; so let's cut it short."

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In spite of the invitation, Cross showed no inclination to rise from his comfortable seat.

"How are the Company's affairs?" he asked casually, shifting the subject abruptly.

"That's my business."

"I know it is, and I'm thinking some of asking you to attend to it. Having some difficulty in getting the banks to take your paper, aren't you?"

"You damned, impertinent . . ."

"Go easy . . . go easy," Cross stopped his outburst. "I've got a reason for asking and a right to know. I hold a lot of the notes of the Norton Manufacturing Company, and I want to have your assurance that my money is safe."

"Where did you get hold of any of our paper?" Norton demanded, but he looked to Treadway for the answer. As the secretary seemed equally mystified, his glance returned to Cross.

"Oh, you've been using my money in your business for the past eighteen months," Cross enlightened him. "The Norton Manufacturing Company means a lot to this town, and when I found out that you were expanding beyond what the banks would carry you, I thought it would be public-spirited to help you out. Now that money is so tight, I wanted to be sure I wasn't taking too much risk."

"You reptile!" Norton exclaimed. "You . . . public spirited! You would like nothing better than to see the Company smashed . . ."

"Calling names doesn't pay notes," Cross observed. "I have nothing against the Company, but the time

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is here right now for you and me to have a show down. I hold a bunch of your obligations coming due during the next thirty days, and I have a right to know whether you're going to meet them."

"Of course we'll meet them . . . How much do you hold?"

"Oh, a little matter of between two hundred and three hundred thousand."

"What!" Norton cried, surprised into showing his amazement. "I don't believe you hold twenty thousand!"

"Thought you might need convincing," Cross drew a package of papers from his pocket, "so I brought these along."

"Let me look at them."

Cross hesitated a moment, and then handed the package to Norton.

"Guess I can trust you," he remarked, dryly.

Norton started to make a retort, but he was more interested in the papers before him. He rapidly tabulated the dates and the amounts.

"Not far from right, was I?" Cross inquired. "Two hundred and sixty-eight thousand, isn't it?"

"Yes," Norton acknowledged; a calmness coming over him which was in strange contrast with his previous attitude.

"That's a lot of money to raise in thirty days with the market the way it is," the caller suggested.

Norton started suddenly as he turned the notes over in his hand. Then he reached for his magnifying glass and scrutinized them carefully, checking off certain

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items on his list. Treadway watched him with obvious interest.

"Aren't they big enough without putting a magnifying glass on them?" Cross inquired jocosely; but Norton paid no attention to him . . . "If you care to sell enough of your bank stock to give me control," he continued, "I might be inclined to extend some of those notes."

Norton handed the package back to him. Then his choler returned, and he shook his fist menacingly in Cross's face.

"You'll be paid every cent that's due you on the day it matures," he declared, . . . "every cent that's *due* you," Norton repeated with careful emphasis.

"That's all I wanted to hear you say." Cross restored the notes to his pocket and rose. "But if anything happens between now and then you might remember my proposition. It will still hold good. Good night."

III

Norton watched him as he departed. As the door closed behind him he turned excitedly to his secretary.

"Treadway," he cried, "at last we've got that old rascal where we want him! On four of those notes both signatures are forged! We'll wait until he presents the first one of these, and then . . ."

It was not necessary for Norton to complete his sentence. Treadway understood him perfectly.

CHAPTER XIV

I

WHEN Lola undertook to make good her promise to interest her father on Richard's behalf, she encountered a well-defined reluctance to depart from his invariable practice of leaving the solution of business problems to others. When he yielded, as he always did to his daughter's persuasion, the concession was to his affection for her rather than to any interest in the subject. Richard on his part had asked for the interview because he was grasping at straws which might prove of service to his cause, and not from any real confidence that Mr. Stewart would prove of the slightest assistance.

The interview developed unexpected surprises for both. Beneath the polished, *dûlétante* exterior, which Richard had admired but which he supposed to express the personality of the man, he discovered a quick sympathy, a clear understanding, a latent force which he had never suspected. It was obvious that these characteristics might have been combined to make William Stewart a power except for his established habit of moving along the line of least resistance. The elder man found in the younger an idealism and a purpose en-

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tirely at variance with the impression he had formed by casual observation, colored, it is true, by the caustic comments made by Richard's father. Each left the conference with greater respect for the other.

Whether or not Richard's idealism could be made practical was another matter, and to a consideration of this Stewart devoted much time and thought. Moving along the line of least resistance had caused him to be misjudged by others as well as Richard. To oppose methods of administration required time and effort, and so long as affairs proceeded in orderly fashion and in such a way as to yield satisfactory returns upon his investment, Stewart preferred to devote himself to more congenial subjects.

Richard, however, left him with a sense of obligation to take a definite stand in this crisis. The demands outlined by the men were entirely at variance with the present policy of the Company, but Stewart kept himself well-informed, and was sufficiently in touch with the trend of the times to realize that some change would inevitably be required in order to reconcile relations between employers and employed. If there was to be a change, why not recognize the necessity promptly, and, as Richard urged, turn it from a liability into an asset? All that Richard asked of him was his influence to secure a hearing before the Board. Knowing James Norton as he did, he understood why the committee desired a jury verdict rather than the decision of a biased judge. His own final conclusion need not be rendered until after all the evidence on both sides had been presented.

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II

"So the boy has hypnotized you, has he?" Norton commented, when Stewart broached the subject. "Well, it won't do him any good. I'm the general manager of this concern, and it's my job to handle these affairs. If the Directors don't agree with me, it's time I stepped down and out, and let the men take over the management. You'll get your chance to talk, William, when I refer the matter to the Board, but if the men have anything to say, let them say it to me. And remember . . . if there are any signs of going over my head, the Directors must act on my resignation first. That boy is crazy and stubborn, and he's bound to stir up all the trouble for me he can."

"I'm wondering if you are not doing more to make trouble for yourself and for all of us than he is," Stewart surprised Norton by taking a stand in opposition to him. "Richard knows you won't listen to him, and that when you present the question to the Board, you will give the answer first. If you have been reading the papers lately, you must realize that managers are thinking more about men than they used to. I'm not sure that these demands Richard outlined to me are sound or just, but I do know that the workman today wants to be treated as an intelligent participator in the concern which employs him instead of merely as a seller of a commodity. He believes he has a right to be consulted, to have things explained to him instead of being the target for orders thrown at him arbitrarily. He has self-respect, just as you and I have, James, and

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to maintain it he insists on self-expression and self-determination."

"I never expected to hear this heresy from one of my Directors," Norton exclaimed doggedly. "It's curious that idea has never come to you before."

"I don't wonder you are surprised," Stewart admitted. "I've been content to go on as we have gone for twenty-five years, giving as little as possible and getting as much as we could, but I'm not blind to the fact that we can't do that any longer. We don't need to discuss the ethics . . . the fact is enough. The world today is determined to found itself on political democracy, and that is fundamentally dependent upon industrial democracy. Richard has asked to present the case for the men. Because of the relations existing between you and him, he naturally questions your ability to be impartial. Some change is inevitable. If we don't recognize this voluntarily, it will be forced on us. If we show our willingness to co-operate, we can undoubtedly make better terms than when the men have demonstrated their power."

"I guess I've outlived my usefulness," Norton replied bitterly. "If this movement to take the control of business out of the hands of those who created it and turn it over to the workmen can appeal to men like you, then my experience of forty years goes by the board. But get this, William, . . so long as I remain the head of this concern, I'll run it. If you persuade the Directors to side with you, then I'll get out and let you handle things as you like. Until then, I'm boss, . . and that goes."

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III

Stewart reported to Richard the failure of his efforts to influence the older man's attitude, and advised him to present his case to his father in due form, promising to support it in the hearing before the Board when it was referred to them for discussion; but he held out little hope for success. The Directors had so long looked upon James Norton as their business mentor that his judgment would inevitably be accepted as final.

"It is only because it affects their personal interests so deeply that I believe it possible," Richard explained, refusing to abandon hope. "The men are in a dangerous frame of mind. It is only right that I should warn you."

"I appreciate their earnestness, but I doubt if there is really any likelihood of violence," Stewart deprecated his companion's apprehensions. "Frankly, I am more concerned just now about you. I believe you are on the right track, and I don't want you to give up. Something must be done to preserve the balance. The scales must be steadied. Perhaps yours is the hand to do it. Don't be discouraged. Everything has to have a beginning, and you will be making history if you succeed in planting some of the seeds of this idea where later they may produce fruit."

"It is playing a game when you know the dice are loaded," Richard demurred; "but your sympathy is most helpful, and I'll carry my part through."

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IV

So Richard headed the committee which visited James Norton, and presented the demands made by the men. Treadway alone was with his chief; with Richard were Alec Sterling and Tony Lemholtz, the latter sullenly representing the radical wing of the union, still fortunately in the minority. Norton looked the committee over critically and in silence, the expression on his face evidencing to Richard, before a word was spoken, the hopelessness of the appeal.

"This is an interesting combination," Norton commented as he completed his survey. "Lemholtz was to be expected, for he has stirred up most of the trouble we have previously had, but even he seems ill at ease with the other members of the committee. Sterling, my trusted right-hand man, in my employ for twenty years, and raised by me during that time from ordinary workman to superintendent of my plant; my son, flesh of my flesh, whom I have brought up from birth. These two recipients of my affection and my favors now league themselves with the professional labor agitator in the edifying attempt to undo the work of my life-time, to destroy the business which has sustained thousands of loyal workmen and their families for a quarter of a century. An interesting combination! Gentlemen, . . I suppose I should say *gentlemen*, . . kindly state your business."

Richard's face flushed crimson as he listened to his father's insulting comments, but he choked down the hot reply which forced itself to his lips. It was not for him to add to the bitterness. Hopeless as the situation

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was, this was his only chance, and he was determined to make the most of it. He read the brief statements which outlined the demands for the new industrial relations, then he enlarged on the advantages to be gained by the combined efforts of employer and employed working on a common basis toward a common end. He pointed out the importance of eliminating discontent and trouble, which disappear when co-operation replaces competition. He urged that when business consisted in making men, the operation of business took care of itself; that management, instead of asking their men to work for them should work with them; that there should no longer be a distinction between those who work for money and those who work with it; that labor should be considered not only as the product of the hands but of the brain as well; that with the incentive given by factory-representation and its guarantee of fair play, the men would instinctively give their best efforts to their production; and finally, to show that his plea was based upon a practical foundation, he demonstrated that what the men asked had already been granted in establishments larger than the Norton Manufacturing Company, where the plan was working out to the advantage of all concerned.

Never had Richard translated so much of himself into words, never had he plead so earnestly for a fair consideration of the claims he made on behalf of the men. When he finished he was physically exhausted, but his eye eagerly sought his father's face to see if he had succeeded in making even a dent in his impenetrable hardness.

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"Why, Richard," Norton said, a half smile relieving his supercilious expression, "you really are quite an orator! I had no idea of it! But it's wasted in business, my boy. We must get you into politics . . . Have the other members of the committee anything to add?"

"If you treat lightly what Richard has said you will bring the house down upon your head," Sterling declared gravely, aroused from his usual calm by Norton's insolence. "I went on this committee to represent the conservative men who want to prevent violence, but if you don't accept the situation as a serious one, we will be powerless to keep things under control."

Norton was bound to listen to Sterling's warning for he had reason to respect the big, raw-boned Scotchman, even though the superintendent's method of control differed so radically from his own. Sterling ruled through the exercise of human instincts rather than through fear, and knowing how cordially the men hated their chief, he had prevented several industrial tragedies in the past by having the master's drastic orders filter through him. Norton had never forgotten or forgiven Sterling for the consideration he showed his men, or for his efforts to maintain for them equitable working conditions, but the superintendent was so beloved that to do more than criticise him for not driving harder would have precipitated crises which James Norton did not care to face. Now, however, affairs had progressed too far to permit retreat.

"So you threaten, Sterling!" he commented. "I scarcely expected that."

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"No, . . we don't threaten, . ." Tony Lemholtz retorted sullenly; "we act!"

"You have the papers, Treadway?" Norton asked, turning to his secretary. "These will be duly presented to the Board of Directors as you request. If they act favorably on them, you will find a new manager at the head of the Norton Manufacturing Company. If not . . ." Norton's face darkened . . . "If not, you may strike and be damned! Inside of thirty days I'll fill every vacant place with men who are loyal and willing to work . . . Good day, *gentlemen!*"

V

The three members of the committee silently left the office and returned to the works. Eager eyes watched them as they passed through the various departments before separating, each again taking up his suspended labor at the point where he had dropped it. Their fellow-workmen needed no report to tell them that the expected had happened, . . that the boss had given them no quarter: the grave expression on Sterling's face, the discouragement which marked Richard's demeanor, and the unholy joy with which Tony bore himself, were eloquent enough.

There was no outward change, but to Richard the air seemed to become more tense, and the throb of the machinery menacing. During his first week in the shop he had heard the voice of the machinery threaten, . . just before Mary Fennessy was caught in the shafting and lost her arm. Now he felt that it was speaking the same terrifying language, talking for the men and

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for the women whose giant slave it was, demanding for them recognition and the right to be heard. The men and women had cursed the machinery when it took the toll of Mary Fennessy's arm, but the powerful monster knew what it was doing! That single tragedy had compelled James Norton to install safety appliances which the law required but had not enforced; and what was a single arm as against the protection of all the workers! Dully, Richard asked himself what the giant was trying to say to him now, and what action it was planning to help him bring James Norton to a realization that his son was not a rebellious, trouble-fomenting agitator, but an accredited messenger from Justice, to announce that she had torn the bandage from her eyes and discovered the inaccuracy of her balances.

CHAPTER XV

I

IF HENRY CROSS succeeded in surprising James Norton by his unexpected call, the tables were turned when William Treadway's name was announced at his own home. The natural inference was that Norton had decided to accept the proposition of turning over enough of the bank stock to give Cross the control, but Treadway promptly assumed entire responsibility for the call. Cross was interested to note that the young man seemed to have discarded some of his superior manner and was inclined to treat him almost as an equal.

"I am in rather a curious position, Mr. Cross," Treadway explained. "Of course, I am Mr. Norton's secretary; but after all I am in the employ of the Company, so I feel that I should act in the interests of the Company rather than those of any individual."

The older man did not as yet grasp the purport of Treadway's remarks, but he saw no reason why he should dispute them.

"Mr. Norton has had smooth sailing for so many years," Treadway went on, "that he cannot and will not bring himself to admit that the Company is today face

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to face with a crisis. I am not telling you anything you do not already know, so there is nothing to be lost by frankness. I don't mean by this to suggest embarrassment for the Company, for its resources are tremendous; but there is no denying the fact that it will be inconvenient to meet all those notes which you hold on the dates they come due."

"That's what I thought," Cross commented with considerable satisfaction. "Norton's bluff didn't fool me a bit."

"Of course not . . . a man with your business acumen and experience," Treadway agreed.

"You heard what I offered him as an alternative?"

"Yes; that is what I am here to talk about."

"Norton has come 'round, has he?"

Treadway smiled indulgently.

"I thought you knew Mr. Norton better than that! No; it is from another source that I think possibly the stock you desire might be obtained, and there is a good chance that I could secure it for you."

Cross regarded his visitor critically.

"Does this mean that you're going to double-cross Norton?" he asked suspiciously.

"Only to the extent of serving the Company," Treadway explained quickly. "It is desirable that some of these notes be renewed. The Directors realize this even if Mr. Norton does not. If you and I can come to an understanding, I think I can help you."

"Hm!" Cross meditated . . . "The only other source that stock could come from would be Stewart."

"Exactly, . . . unless in the meantime some pressure

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was brought to bear on Mr. Norton which would cause him to change his mind."

Cross remained silent for several moments. The situation was even more interesting than he had supposed.

"Just what is your proposition?" he demanded.

"It is really accepting your proposition rather than making a new one," Treadway corrected. "If you will permit renewals on certain of those notes, I will undertake to secure enough of the bank stock to give you the control, . . . but I must have a little time to make the turn."

"How many of the notes, and how much time?"

"We can take care of all but \$100,000 without inconvenience. I will give you renewals for these, extending them six months, and before they mature you shall have the stock."

"All right," Cross said crisply after a moment's consideration; "I accept. Which notes do you wish renewed?"

Treadway took a small leather book from his pocket and made a pencil memorandum which he handed to Cross.

"These four, for \$25,000 each. I'll bring down the new notes tonight."

"And a signed agreement of our understanding."

"Of course," Treadway acquiesced; "but you realize that to put this through we must keep the matter between ourselves?"

"Yes," Cross agreed. "I've been waiting twenty years for this. I guess I can wait six months longer. You're sure you can carry out your promise?"

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"You have my word."

"True," Cross commented; "but I'm not sure how much you've been contaminated by working with James Norton."

"If you have any question . . ." Treadway assumed his previous patronizing superiority.

"Oh, no; it's all right," Cross said quickly. "I suppose I'm a bit prejudiced. I'll take a chance."

II

Treadway left the Cross mansion with a light step and climbed the hill to pay his respects to Lola Stewart. This was one of his fortunate days, and he felt inclined to take advantage of the present favor of the fickle goddess. He had just rectified a mistake, and the ease with which he had accomplished this pleased him. Any one is liable to make a slip, . . . to be able to correct it promptly and prevent it from becoming a calamity is a mark of genius. In six months' time he would be beyond the need of taking chances, and this period of grace he had just secured.

He found himself the only caller, and this he considered another favor of fortune. More than this, Lola was in a lighter mood than he remembered to have seen her for a long time. Richard's new attitude, had Treadway but known it, lifted a world of anxiety from Lola's heart, and she dwelt on this rather than on any doubt as to his loyalty to her. She had followed the progress of affairs as closely as she could through her father. From him she learned of James Norton's unalterable antagonism, but she knew that this had

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been discounted by Richard, and she blindly pinned her faith on her father and the other Directors. Treadway was a welcome caller today because she counted on him for further information direct from the fountain head.

"How goes the merry little battle?" she inquired lightly.

"Oh . . . at the plant, you mean? We're all set."

"For a strike?"

"Yes; the men are bound to have it, and there's nothing to do but let them learn their lesson."

"But the Directors haven't passed on the men's petition yet," she suggested.

Treadway laughed.

"The Directors are prayerfully considering," he admitted, . . . "but James Norton is ordering in the strike-breakers."

Lola sobered. For the first time she realized how little her father figured in this great corporation in spite of his heavy holdings. Treadway was an echo of his chief, and what he said made it clear that while James Norton went through the motions of consulting his Board of Directors, in reality he considered them scarcely entitled to the courtesy of expressing their opinion! She glanced over to the great chair on the opposite side of the veranda where her father sat reading.

It was a picture well worth looking at, for William Stewart's face might have served as model for a Greek god, and the beauty of its lines was enhanced by the shaggy crown of pure white hair. She recalled

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what he had said to Dick: "I am at fault to spend my life assimilating instead of giving out." She had demurred when he said it, but now she knew that he was right. "Dreams and books!" Until this moment she had been quite content to have her father what he was; now she knew that she wished him otherwise. He was right in saying that she and her mother had spoiled him, and Lola now realized how unfair this had been to him. Their intimacy had been the sweetest thing in the world to her, but it had deprived her father of something Nature had intended him to have. To have encouraged him to hold his place in the world need not have deprived her of the delightful cavalier or the comforting confidant, nor have marred the fineness of his finished gentility. Because he had been encouraged to dream, this other . . . the man of action . . . was in a position to crush the very idealism of which he dreamt!

III

While these thoughts were passing through Lola's mind Treadway rambled on, content to hold her an apparent listener. At last he felt that the moment had arrived to play his trump card.

"I passed Dick and that Mirovich girl as I came up," he remarked casually. "Curious what he sees in that cheap little skirt! Of course she's pretty and all that, but . . ."

Lola flushed in spite of the assurance she gave herself again and again that she understood. With an effort she threw off the instinctive feeling of resentment against Richard.

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"I shouldn't think you would like to see them together," she railed him. "From what Dick tells me I suspect that between them they are planning to keep Mr. Norton and you in hot water for some time to come."

Treadway was frankly surprised by her attitude, but he suspected that it was simply defensive reaction.

"It probably pleases me just about as much as it does you."

"Oh, I don't mind," Lola said lightly. "Olga is a smart little thing, and she is heart and soul in this plan Dick has worked out. Have you ever met her?"

"I've seen her in action a couple of times, when the old man has had her on the mat for fighting with the other girls. Gad! What a temper she has!"

"Dick was telling me about her temper," Lola laughed. Then her tone became more serious. "But it is that very temper which gives her individuality. It is simply the wrong expression of a will which makes her somebody. If even now her education could be completed, and she could live in different environment she would make a wonderful woman."

"Perhaps Dick will see that she has the opportunity," Treadway remarked significantly.

Lola looked at him steadily.

"Why don't you suggest that to him?" she asked, with a meaning he could not ignore.

"Oh, don't take it that way," Treadway hastened to appease Lola's growing indignation. "I get sore sometimes to see Dick playing so fast and loose with you, and perhaps I say more than I should."

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"You are saying more than you should now."

"You know how I feel about you, Lola. That must be my excuse. I stood aside when Dick came home, for I knew what he had been through, and he was entitled to anything he wanted. But if he doesn't want . . ."

"What makes you think Dick doesn't want now what he wanted before?"

"The way he neglects you, Lola, and the way he plays around with this factory-girl."

"Would it change your opinion if I told you that except for my unwillingness Dick and I would already be married?"

Treadway's face lighted.

"Then you don't care for him?" he cried. "Then I have a chance?"

"I care for Dick Norton more than for any other man," she declared with spirit. "If I ever marry I expect to marry Dick. At the present moment I have no desire to marry any one; but Dick Norton is my friend . . . a very dear friend. I'm proud of what he's doing, and I have no criticism to make of anything he does . . . Now you know where I stand. Let me give you another cup of tea."

"Well . . ." Treadway stammered. "That's right from the shoulder, isn't it? Dick is a fine chap and all that, of course; but I don't understand . . ."

"There's a whole lot about Dick Norton that wiser people than you don't understand," Lola interrupted, as she viciously dropped the second lump of sugar into his cup.

CHAPTER XVI

I

AFTER Treadway left her, Lola went over to where her father was sitting. Pulling up a stool she seated herself at his feet, and leaned against his knees.

"Daddy," she asked, as he laid down his book and stroked her hair affectionately, "you're going to help Dick, aren't you?"

"Yes, dear;" he replied. "I'm convinced that the boy is on the right track. I've told him so, and have urged him not to lose heart. I shall do my best to make the exact situation clear to the Directors when the Board meets tomorrow."

"But you don't think there is much chance of their giving Dick's plan a trial?"

"Absolutely none. We all have let Norton run us so long that we haven't the moral strength to oppose him now."

"Even when you know he's wrong?"

Stewart sensed the quiet criticism in her question, and it was as uncomfortable as it was unusual.

"I have told you that I shall do my best to present the matter effectively," he defended himself; "but I

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have only one vote, and Norton's accumulated influence is far greater than mine. What I have said already has caused a break in my long friendship with James Norton, but I promised Dick I would support him, and I shall carry it through."

"Good for you, daddy!" Lola exclaimed. "But it will make a lot of difference how you present it. Are you going to be firm and unyielding, eloquent and magnificent?"

"Of course I am going to be firm."

Stewart's back straightened, and he held his head with the air of an emperor.

Lola clapped her hands. "You are splendid when you look like that!" she cried. "Oh, I wish I could hear you when you talk to the Directors! I was afraid that you would be courteous and agreeable, as you usually are; but that would be a mistake in dealing with a man like James Norton, wouldn't it, daddy?"

"Of course . . . of course," he agreed with her. "Perhaps it would be a good idea for me to run over those papers of Dick's again, and sketch out what I'm going to say."

"Splendid, daddy! I do wish I might hear you talk to those Directors tomorrow! Even if they haven't enough self-respect to vote for what is right after you make it clear to them that it is right, your conscience will be clear."

"Yes . . . yes, dear. I think I'll go to the library now," he added.

Lola quickly rose and assisted him to extricate himself from the recesses of the great chair.

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"Perhaps you would care to look over my notes since you can't hear me speak tomorrow?" he added.

"May I, daddy?" she cried. "I'd love to!"

II

Thus the unexpected came to pass at the meeting of the Board the following day. William Stewart astounded his fellow-directors and James Norton by the energy and earnestness with which he argued for a thorough investigation into the merits of the case as presented by Richard for the workmen. Because of his sponsorship, the matter was discussed at length and finally voted upon; but from the first it was at best a formality, as Stewart had predicted. Norton bullied his Directors as he bullied his men, the only difference being in the way he did it. They had been docile for so many years that Stewart's action in venturing to take a viewpoint opposed to that of the General Manager could be regarded only as a temporary lapse in his loyalty to the Company.

"You don't understand, Stewart," one of the others said to him. "Norton has already passed on this, and turned it down."

"That is why I am fighting for it," he retorted with unexpected zeal. "I have acquiesced all these years in Norton's policies because I believed them to be right. Now I believe he's wrong. No one is infallible. Our responsibility to the Company is to prevent any representative of this concern from making a mistake. I'm trying to live up to that responsibility."

"I know . . . I know," was the placating reply, "but

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Norton understands this situation better than we do. He's handled men all his life. If we don't back him up he'll resign, and who could be put in his place? That would be a very serious problem . . ."

"It is one we are likely to have to face at any moment," Stewart insisted. "The fact that we are not prepared for this emergency is evidence enough that we are not properly protecting the stockholders."

"But Norton wouldn't stand for an understudy . . ."

"And I won't stand for being a puppet," Stewart retorted sharply, again assuming imperial dignity. "Except for Norton I have more invested in this business than any other single stockholder, and for the first time in my life I realize how easily my interests may be jeopardized by the stubbornness of one man. We are facing a crisis now, but as soon as it can be done with safety I propose to show the stockholders the dangerous position we are in, and take steps to remedy the situation. I appreciate what Norton has done for the business during these years, but no man holds a monopoly on all the knowledge in the world. This Company has become too large for any one to swing without the constructive advice of other men competent to give it. That is what we are here for. If Norton has reached a point where he won't take advice, it is time to replace him with a man who will."

Stewart's attitude created a profound sensation, but it failed to influence the result. He might force a change in the future, but the Directors were dealing with the present, and the present was dominated by Norton. The General Manager of the Norton Manu-

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facturing Company was formally authorized by his Board of Directors to make such reply to the demands of the men as his judgment might dictate, and the meeting adjourned.

Norton lost no time in sending to the committee a flat refusal to negotiate further, and gave orders to have the strike-breakers from outside ready to replace with the utmost promptness the workers who left their jobs.

He went about his preparations with a zeal even beyond his usual dynamic, driving force. He had a triple purpose now: he would show the men that he was still their master; he must beat them if he was to hold together his Board of Directors and prevent Stewart from undermining his position with the stockholders; he would demonstrate to his son that the experience of forty years in solving business problems and in meeting rebellious workmen out-balanced the conceit of youth and the new-fangled ideas of meddling theorists. If battle it was to be, Norton was determined to prove that the old methods were still the best; that capital still demanded subservience from labor; that the Norton Manufacturing Company was going to be run just as it always had been even if the war had turned everything else upside down.

III

Richard believed himself prepared for the complete failure of his efforts to have the management meet the men half way, but in reality he absolutely refused to accept the inevitable. It was a case where the desires

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of the heart unconsciously took precedence over the sober judgment of the mind. He knew his father's influence with the Directors, but Mr. Stewart's sympathy and co-operation encouraged him to expect the impossible. For weeks he had worked on his problem, arguing with one man, urging another, pointing out the prosperity which must follow when the hated terms "capital" and "labor" were obliterated from the language and replaced by "employer" and "employed"; when the object of both was production, and each gave to the other the co-operation he needed to make this production maximum.

He had been successful with the men. In spite of the opposition of those who saw in the new industrial relations the passing of their power, there were enough in the labor ranks who were reasonable and loved peace to make the experiment possible, and Richard was confident that its success would allay their suspicions and give to it an enduring permanence. It was a real triumph to have accomplished this, and Richard knew it. Yet he had failed. His own father, fortified by precedent, blinded by habit, cherishing "what always was" as more precious than "what is to be," refused to see in this triumph anything save rebellion and sedition! He refused to read the handwriting on the wall, even though the letters seemed to Richard to be written in flaming symbols, foretelling with terrifying clarity the fate of the world unless the basic principles of democracy were embodied in industrial enterprise as they were guaranteed in the constitutions of nations.

"Blind . . . blind . . . blind!" he shouted, though

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there was no one to hear him in the small bedroom of the flat which he had occupied since he left his father's house. "Why can't they realize that indemnities won't give the world peace, nor the readjustment of boundary lines, nor treaties, nor armies, nor ships. Production . . . nothing but production will solve the problem, and without understanding and co-operation in industry there can be no production. We who offered our lives for the peace of the world know, and we have a right to be heard. We have a right . . . we have a right . . ."

Then something gave way, and Richard sank in a heap upon the floor. The mental strain had worn down his physical strength, never fully recovered since his wound, until the frayed nerves yielded. There Olga found him when she called later in the day to receive instructions. There the doctor, hastily summoned by the terrified girl, helped her to get him into bed, and prescribed absolute quiet and watchful nursing.

"Who is he?" Dr. Thurber inquired.

Being a new-comer to Norcross, he failed to recognize the son of the town's leading citizen.

"He's my man!" Olga declared defiantly, fearful lest this opportunity to serve him be taken away from her.

"I mean, what is his name?"

"Richards," Olga lied, rejoiced that his identity was not disclosed.

There she nursed him day and night, jealously guarding and protecting him while the workers walked out from the plant; while the strike-breakers arrived; while Alec Sterling, taking Richard's place, struggled to hold

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back Tony Lemholtz and his radicals in their lust for violence; while Lola worried over Richard's absence and silence; while the atmosphere of Norcross became intense in its anticipation of something unusual and malevolent.

Olga permitted no foot save the doctor's to cross the threshold of the little room, and was happy in the praise he gave her for her instinctive skill and devotion. Alec Sterling alone knew her secret. The men were told that Richard was away arranging matters with the union chiefs, and no one else inquired.

CHAPTER XVII

I

ON Sundays, James Norton, deacon in the Congregational Church in Norcross, never failed to sit in his family pew or to admit himself a miserable sinner. This was a condition he acknowledged solely to his Maker, and then only on Sundays. On other days he considered himself quite competent to look after his own affairs. Another invariable custom was to walk to and from church. His father had made it a point to obey the Biblical injunction to rest his beasts upon the seventh day, and the early impression made upon James Norton's mind extended now even to his automobiles.

September in Norcross is the loveliest month in all the year. The air turns crisp and invigorating, the gardens give their final flare of color in the masses of chrysanthemums, asters, dahlias, salvia, and canna, and the trees vie with the gardens in the gorgeous brilliancy of their array.

Norton found it a relief on this September Sunday to get away from the great empty house, away from himself. Once inside the house of God he found a rest which came to him at no other time. He was sincere

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in his belief that he was a conscientious, consistent Christian, and when he felt the pain of his son's defection and of his former friend Stewart's disloyalty, he turned to his Maker with a confidence that the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," were spoken to him. He knew himself to be stern; that was but the expression of his duty to those who required discipline. No man could say that he was not just and honest. He contributed to the church and to charities; he had given of himself in the building of a business from which thousands gained their sustenance; except for him the town itself would lack its present individuality. As he sat in his pew this Sabbath morning he reconciled the bitterness of his personal experiences by recalling the comforting thought that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

Norton could not have repeated the text nor told much of the subject matter of the discourse. The minister did not interest him, and of what use were these theories of life after death and all that sort of thing when no one could prove anything one way or the other? Norton was at church not for what he could give to it or what he could receive from it, but because of the habit which years had established. The fact that he went gave him satisfaction, and the experience was soothing after six days of strife and turmoil.

II

The services over, Norton found himself walking behind Henry Cross. Perhaps it was the humanizing effect of the last hour and a half, or it may have been

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that a bit of the September beauty crept for a moment into his lonely old heart. Instead of brushing past him, as was his custom, and expressing his disdain by the straightness of his back, Norton surprised Cross by letting his step fall in with his.

"Feeling easier about that money, aren't you?" he asked without preliminaries.

"I don't usually discuss business matters on the Sabbath day," Cross replied, assuming a non-committal attitude in order to recover from his surprise.

"I'd hate to take a chance on offering you that bank stock you want, even on the Sabbath, unless I was willing to let it go," Norton chuckled.

"There might be some exceptions," Cross admitted.

"Why did you hold back that note that fell due on Friday?" Norton inquired. "There was plenty of money in the bank to take care of it."

Henry Cross looked up quickly. After what Treadway had said to him, Norton's remark was a bit surprising. Safely deposited among his securities was a renewal of this note, bearing James Norton's signature.

"You know why that note wasn't presented."

"You are right," Norton shouted. "I do know, but I didn't think you knew I knew. I'd like nothing better than to have you present it. You don't dare!"

Cross regarded his companion critically to make sure that he was in earnest.

"I thought you were a business man, . . . or is your memory failing? It isn't customary to present a note for payment after accepting a renewal."

"What!" exclaimed Norton. "A renewal? You're

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crazy! No renewal has ever been issued for that note, and never will be."

There could be no question of the sincerity of Norton's statement, and Henry Cross found himself somewhat bewildered.

"Either you're surpassing yourself in bluffing," he said, "or there's something here neither one of us understands. I hold a renewal of that note in my safe-deposit box at the bank. I can't get at it today, but if it would interest you to see it I'll show it to you at the bank meeting tomorrow morning."

"You do that," Norton cried; "and let me know where you got it. Good day to you."

Norton stamped off, bringing down his heavy cane with resounding thumps on the new granolithic sidewalk which was the town's pride. Henry Cross watched him as the distance between them widened, then he, too, proceeded to his home with much the same feeling of bewilderment which Norton himself experienced.

III

On this same Sunday Richard Norton was discovered, and it was Barry O'Carolan who found him. The bills had come in for Jack Munsey's funeral, and Barry needed the contribution which Richard had so freely pledged. Every one accepted the report which Alec Sterling circulated that young Norton was out of town, and many were the conjectures and comments occasioned by his continued absence at just this crisis. Having no better idea come to him, Barry hobbled down to Richard's boarding-place, hoping to gain informa-

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tion which would enable him to acquaint "the Capt'n" with the situation.

Olga met him at the door of Richard's chamber and barred his entrance. Her attitude and the defiant expression on her face were in themselves a direct challenge.

"What are you doin' here?" Barry demanded.

"None of your business, Barry O'Carolan," she replied angrily. "Why are you snooping around, any way?"

"I want to find out where the Capt'n is. I've got somethin' important to say to him. And I'm guessin' he's not very far from where we're standin' now."

"S-ssh!" she whispered anxiously, seeing that concealment was no longer possible. "Mr. Richard has been awful sick, and I have been nursing him. But you will not give him away, will you, Barry? He does not want the men to know that he is so sick for fear Tony will take advantage of it. You will not give him away, will you?"

Barry was bewildered, but if Richard wished the knowledge of his illness to be suppressed, that was enough.

"He's not much sick, is he?"

"He is better now, but he cannot see any one yet. The doctor says he may in a few days."

"Can't I tell even Miss Lola? She's terrible worried about him."

"No . . . no! not her!" the girl exclaimed impulsively, fearful lest this knowledge should result in having the "Stewart lady" supplant her.

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"When can I see him?" Barry demanded, instinctively resenting the protective attitude Olga assumed. He had given his word to Lola that things were going to come out all right for her, and the present situation contained elements which made him wonder if he had made a false estimate after all. He had assured her that Richard's work with the men could never take the place of what a woman could be in his life, but here was a woman . . . another woman . . .

Olga's eyes anxiously followed the changing expression on Barry's face, and she could not fail to note his disapproval. The security she had enjoyed was threatened, and she must act promptly and daringly. She knew how loyal the one-legged man was to Richard. If he could be convinced that things were as "the Capt'n" wished them to be her secret might be kept at least a little longer.

"Barry," she said, after a delay in answering the question, "I think it would be all right for you to see Mr. Richard today. The doctor lets Alec Sterling come in, and I will take a chance."

"Fine!" he cried, relieved to have the situation clear so unexpectedly; "but first let me go and get some flowers for him . . . It won't take me more than half an hour . . . You can't have a person sick without havin' flowers, you know, . . . they sort of go together . . . I'll be right back."

"You will not tell anybody where he is?"

"Not if he says himself that he don't want people to know," was the guarded reply as Barry hobbled down the stairs.

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When he returned, Olga admitted him at once. As she had said, Richard was better now, and the girl had greater difficulty in enforcing the doctor's injunction to keep him quiet. Alec Sterling came in to see him once each day, so that the invalid was in touch with the strike as far as it seemed wise for him to know.

Olga took her place at the head of the bed, still jealously watchful.

"Hello, Barry," Richard greeted him; "this is a nice trick I've played on myself, isn't it?"

"But not for long, Capt'n. You'll be out again in a few days."

"I must be," Richard replied emphatically.

"Here are some flowers for you . . ."

Barry laid the gorgeous bunch of chrysanthemums on the coverlet where Richard could reach them.

"They're from Miss Lola's garden," he added, watching to see what effect the mention of the name would have.

"So they are, . . . I know just the spot where you picked them, Barry. How is Miss Lola, and the Stewarts, and everybody?"

"As well as they could be after worryin' 'bout you."

"Oh, there's nothing to worry about," Richard insisted. "I did too much, that's all. I'm feeling fine today, and I'll be on my job soon, I promise you . . . I'm sorry I couldn't go to Jack's funeral. Tell Olga how much my share is. She is my treasurer now."

Richard looked up smilingly into the girl's face, and took in his hand which rested lightly on his shoulder.

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"I can never repay this child for her devoted care," he said gratefully. "A wife could have done no more."

Olga flushed at the tribute, but Barry could see the joy come into her eyes, even as she deprecated her efforts.

"Hell!" she said consciously; "I'd have done as much for a sick dog."

Richard was amused by the girl's characteristic response, but it troubled Barry. Perhaps rumor had been right, and things had gone farther than he had been willing to acknowledge to himself.

"Miss Lola would have come if she'd known . . ."

"You hold your tongue, Barry O'Carolan!"

Richard held up a restraining hand, which Olga at once respected.

"Olga is right, Barry," he said. "It is best that for the present no one should know where I am . . . Miss Lola could not have come to this place, even if she had wanted to. It happened just as it should, for Olga was willing to take care of me, and I am happy and grateful to have had her. She has been a wonderful help to me, Barry. You ought to find a girl like Olga and marry her."

"No girl would ever marry half a man like me," Barry stammered in his embarrassment . . . "But there're some men with two legs who haven't got such good eye-sight as I have," with which enigmatical comment Barry turned to Olga for the funeral contribution and took his departure, the stamp of his wooden leg on the stairs registering his entire disapproval of the situation.

CHAPTER XVIII

I

WHILE Richard lay convalescing, Norcross passed through its own physical disarrangement. The presence of so many hundreds of unemployed workers congested the streets, and introduced an element of discontent hitherto unknown in the orderly, self-satisfied town. There were occasional outbreaks, but the general attitude of the strikers was that of peaceful patience, confident of being able to outwait the management at the plant.

When the first strike-breakers arrived they occasioned curiosity rather than resentment. What could these strangers accomplish in running machines which year after year had known the touch of but a single hand! It was simply a gallery play on the part of the management to impress the men with their independence. Skilled workmen are not to be picked up on every corner. These Hessians, who came in for blood money at the behest of Capital, might go through the motions, but they could never perform the work of those whose places they took!

The workmen saw little to complain of until Tony Lemholtz began to point it out to them. Then they

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became apprehensive. Tony was clever enough to realize that the strike-breakers offered him his opportunity to recover his lost leadership. Richard Norton had won the men away from him by glowing pictures of a future which had failed to materialize. As a spell-binder Richard had temporarily surpassed him; but now his rival had taken himself off, . . . whither he knew not nor did he care. The field was clear for Tony to pull down the structure Richard had reared, and to salvage the material for building to his own design.

Groups of workmen met each incoming train and sought to dissuade the newcomers from going to the plant. Moral suasion was employed as the strike-breakers went to and from their work. In some instances these efforts were successful, but for the most part the men had come to Norcross for a definite purpose and went about their business stolidly. In a few instances the attempts at suasion passed the bounds and resulted in personal encounters, but except for these Alec Sterling and his conservatives held back the fire-brands in spite of Tony's tirades.

"Leave them alone," Sterling counseled. "They're ruining more than half the stuff they turn out. We're all right if we keep our heads. The management can't run the plant without us, and they know it. If we use violence, we'll play right into their hands. Leave them alone."

"Yes, leave 'em alone and let 'em think we're scared of 'em!" Tony retorted. "Leave 'em alone and let 'em take the bread out of our mouths!"

"You haven't gone hungry yet, have you?" Sterling

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came back. "You're getting your pay regular from the union, whatever happens to us. You should worry."

"Yes, I'm gettin' my pay," Tony admitted; "and I'm earnin' it. Not by standin' 'round like you and lettin' 'em tear the coats off our backs, but by doin' somethin' to get through with this loafin', so that all of us can get our pay. They never would have brought in these scabs if they hadn't thought we was cowards. That's what you get for listenin' to that highbrow *Mister* Richard Norton! Where is he now? Run away, to some place where it's healthier, that's what he's done."

"He'll be back when he's needed," Sterling asserted staunchly; "and when he comes you'll have reason to know it. He won't be overlooking you this time."

II

Thus the battle of words raged. Sometimes the men seemed content to abide by Sterling's moderation, sometimes the superintendent felt that his last grip on them had loosened, and that they would follow Tony to tear down the works. Twice he sought interviews with James Norton, but he accomplished nothing.

"Come to me when the men have learned their lesson, Sterling," Norton told him. "I can run this plant without 'em, and I will run it. You all are making me a lot of trouble which I shan't forget, and you all must pay the price for it."

"Then you had better have the State troops ready to act in an emergency," Sterling warned him. "There is an element among the strikers I don't like. We'll hold them back as long as we can, but when the storm

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breaks you and the works will need all the protection you can get."

Norton laughed at him.

"I thought you knew men better than that, Sterling. They haven't got it in 'em. They're skunks, every one of 'em, and you know how much courage a skunk has. They'll make the air foul with their threats, but they don't dare raise a hand against me. I've ruled 'em by fear all these years, and they're afraid of me now. There won't be any storm, Sterling, . . just a little breeze stirred up by their own hot air."

Sterling pleaded in vain. The old man sat tight in his overweening confidence, and refused to see anything in the superintendent's warnings except an effort to weaken the Company's stand in the interest of the men.

"You always take the men's side, Sterling," Norton told him. "That's the only criticism I've ever had to make of you. If you had stood up stiffer in the past I shouldn't have to be doing it now. The men have got almighty cocky with their big wages these last few years. They've forgotten how it feels to have their bellies empty. I'm in no hurry. We'll do a good job now and have it over with. If these men ever come back into this plant it will be on a basis which will keep things smooth for a good long time. Tell 'em that from me, Sterling."

III

Norton found Henry Cross a diversion from his troubles with the men. True to his promise, after the bank

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meeting that Monday morning, Cross handed Norton the renewal note, and awaited his comments.

"Where did you get this?" Norton demanded, after he had given it a careful examination.

"I don't know that it makes much difference," Cross parried. "These things frequently pass through several hands before they get back home."

"In this particular instance it makes a good deal of difference."

"That's your signature all right, isn't it?" Cross asked complacently. "That's all I'm interested in."

Norton hesitated a moment. The episode of the notes was not developing exactly as he had expected, and he was puzzled. Henry Cross could not sit there so calmly if he had in any way been a party to the forgery.

"As a matter of fact," Norton said slowly "neither signature is genuine."

Cross sprang excitedly from his chair.

"What do you mean?" he cried. "The signatures are forged?"

Norton nodded. "And rather badly done at that. Now you realize the importance of telling me where you got this note. The one which fell due last Friday was also a forgery."

Henry Cross rarely became flustered, but this occasion was a notable exception. He fell back into his chair speechless for the moment, and then made several efforts before the words finally came.

"This . . . this isn't another one of your bluffs?" he demanded.

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"It's serious business. Four of those notes you showed me at the house the other night were forgeries."

Cross's face turned white.

"Do you happen to remember the amounts?"

"Yes; each note was for \$25,000 . . . I guess this is the time when we'll have to play the game together whether we want to or not. Where did you get the note?"

"You wait right here."

Cross rose clumsily, and leaving the President's office made for his safe-deposit box. Securing the desired papers, he returned to Norton, and laid on his desk the renewal notes for the three remaining maturities.

"How about these?" he demanded.

The pathetic tone in Cross's voice would have amused Norton except for the significance of the affair to him and to the Company.

"Phoney, every one of 'em," he said crisply, after a careful examination; "and the notes they extended were just like 'em. I'm afraid you're in for a pretty loss."

"We'll see about that!" Cross cried, trembling in his excitement. "We'll see whether or not a man is responsible for the acts of his own secretary . . . Read this!"

"The acts of his own secretary . . ." Norton repeated slowly, holding the proffered paper in his hand . . . "Look here, Cross, are you crazy or am I?"

"Read that," Cross insisted, pointing to the agreement drawn up by Treadway which he had just handed him.

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At first the importance of the document was not apparent to Norton. Then its significance became clear, and a wave of anger passed over him, followed by a pain as real as if a blow had been dealt. The whole world had turned against him! His son, his friend Stewart, his trusted superintendent, and now Treadway, on whom he had relied implicitly, and on whom he had rested more than ever since he had forced Richard out of his life! Forgetful of Cross's presence, he bowed his head on his hands and groaned.

"We must go right up to the plant and arrest him," Cross declared, mopping his face with his handkerchief, unmindful of everything except his personal tragedy.

The words brought Norton back to realities. He held up his hand restrainingly.

"There is no haste, Cross; he can't get away . . . Let me think this out. I'm dumfounded."

"Do you acknowledge your responsibility?"

"Don't be a fool! Of course there's no responsibility; but you'd better let me handle it. I'll pledge myself to help you all I can. I've got to think it out."

"You won't let him get away?"

"No," Norton answered wearily; "he must pay the price. Now leave me alone . . . Treadway a criminal! I trusted him. I cared for him. I wished my son was like him! My God! . . . Richard at least is honest!"

CHAPTER XIX

I

BLACK MONDAY" they still call it in Norcross. Henry Cross found the day dismal enough when James Norton disclosed to him the fact that he had paid out a princely sum for alleged business paper which was absolutely worthless. Norton felt its dreariness when he returned to the plant.

It was raining hard, as if to average things up for the wonderful Sunday which preceded it. The weather appeared to reflect itself in the strikers. They had been getting more restless each week, and when "Black Monday" opened up in sullen fashion it found them sullen too. But the weather was not wholly responsible. Sunday had been a day of labor for Tony Lemholtz and his aides. James Norton's parting words to Alec Sterling were overheard by one whom the strikers had "planted" in the office, and Tony had not overlooked their value in working the men up to a fighting frenzy.

"He calls us skunks, fellers," Tony yelled from the housetops, . . . "the boss calls us skunks! He says we're scared of him. He'll wait 'til our bellies are empty, will he? . . . and then he'll take us back on his own terms. Now will you listen to Alec Sterling, or will you stand up and show yourselves men?"

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All day Sunday Tony watched the crowds of men about him grow larger and listen to him with deeper interest. He marked the angry flushes which came into their faces as he talked, and he delighted to goad them on the raw which the experiences of the past few weeks had produced.

On this Monday morning the cold, wet, penetrating east wind settled into their wounds, real and fancied. Alec Sterling now could scarcely find a listener. The men moved about in groups, and there was an unusually large number of personal encounters with the strike-breakers. As James Norton's limousine passed some of the men on its way back from the bank to the plant there were howls and cat-calls, but to the old man inside these meant nothing. His mind was intent upon something else. By noon several of the groups had joined together, with Tony at their head, still skilfully exciting them until there were shouts containing threats, and loud exhortations to "get the boss."

Sterling felt it necessary to acquaint Richard with the conditions. In spite of Olga's protests, the sick man struggled to his feet, relieved to find that his strength was sufficient for this achievement.

"I have your promise to keep me posted?" Richard demanded of Sterling, and the superintendent gave his word.

II

Unmindful of the turmoil outside, the master of Norcross entered his office. Never had it seemed so cheerless, never had he seated himself at the great desk with

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such despair in his heart. He knew that from now on he must distrust every one. If those who had been nearest and dearest to him could so chastise him, there was nothing to hope for in the future. Then a terrifying thought came to him . . . if every one had turned against him, could it be possible that he himself had after all been wrong? He sat there with bowed head, striving to analyze himself and the life he had lived so strictly in accord with what he believed was right.

Treadway entered the office and was startled by his physical appearance.

"You're not well," he exclaimed. "Shall I call a doctor?"

Norton roused himself, gave him a long, searching glance, and then shook his head.

"No, Treadway," he said in a voice so hollow that it added to the secretary's alarm. "It isn't a doctor I need; it's time in which to readjust myself . . . Sit down."

With wondering eyes never leaving his chief's face, Treadway seated himself and waited. That it was an epochal moment he could not fail to sense, but its exact purport did not occur to him. Norton's question therefore took him completely off his guard.

"Why did you do it?" the old man cried, with so much feeling in his voice that Treadway was genuinely affected; but as yet no understanding came to relieve his suspense.

"Do what?" he inquired. "I'm afraid I don't . . ."

Treadway's lack of comprehension angered Norton. To his mind, in which honor was synonymous with life,

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it was unbelievable that any man could be guilty of crime without having its consciousness ever stalking before him. The calm, unruffled bearing stirred in Norton a resentment which made him again the pitiless judge rather than the injured patron.

"Don't try stalling!" he said sharply. "Your game is up . . . And I trusted you, Treadway!"

The secretary rose with that consummate dignity he knew so well how to assume.

"Something has evidently occurred of which I am ignorant, . . I have apparently lost your confidence, sir . . ."

"You have lost more than that," Norton interrupted sternly. "When a man stoops to crime he loses everything."

"Sir!" Treadway exclaimed indignantly. "If you are applying your remarks to me . . ."

"Cut out the dramatics!" Norton commanded; "I want facts. How many notes are there outstanding on which my name has been forged by you?"

Treadway stiffened, and regarded his chief steadily for several moments in silence, but during this period his mind was unusually active. So Cross had given him away! Treadway knew Norton well enough to realize the hopelessness of throwing himself on his mercy. His only possible salvation lay in appealing to the older man's self-interest. As Norton watched him, he saw a complete metamorphosis in his secretary . . . The sleek, polished, deferential man of the world changed into a cunning, resourceful antagonist. There were no evidences of remorse or of apprehension.

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Treadway at bay held himself perfectly in hand. He calmly reseated himself and played with the ivory paper-cutter.

"At last we meet as man to man," he said defiantly. "You have discovered this too late, Norton. A year ago you might have made things unpleasant for me; today I have something on which to trade."

"I have no interest in your personal affairs," Norton exclaimed. "I asked you a question and I want an answer . . . How many forged notes are outstanding?"

"I really don't know without consulting my private books," Treadway answered indifferently; "but enough to make it absolutely necessary for you to trade with me if you wish to straighten matters out. I have taken good care of that."

"Trade with you?" Norton repeated. "What nonsense are you talking! Trade with a criminal . . . a forger! I've asked you a question. If you don't choose to answer, that's all there is to it . . . I had hoped there might be some explanation which would at least mitigate the enormity of your duplicity."

"I can take care of everything if you give me time," Treadway explained. "The money is not lost . . . In fact I've done very well with it. Give me your promise that you won't prosecute, and no one need suffer at all. In another six months I shouldn't have needed any . . . loans from the Company."

"Do you realize that you are asking me to compound a felony?"

Treadway shrugged his shoulders.

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"You've driven some pretty hard bargains yourself, Norton."

"Have I ever broken the law?"

"Perhaps not," Treadway admitted; "but there are those who say you've bent it."

The assurance manifested by his secretary astonished Norton. He became more and more incensed by his insolence, but he was interested to see how far the man would go.

"What is this 'trade' you suggest?"

"Ah! that's better!" Treadway exclaimed. "I felt sure you didn't care to have this complication on top of all the others! The Company reached its borrowing limit at the banks six weeks ago. The note-brokers who have been handling the Company paper since then are only doing so to protect their holdings. They know that with our cancelations, shrunken inventories, and labor troubles there is at least a chance that even the famous Norton Manufacturing Company may find itself seriously embarrassed. If they discover now that a part of the paper they hold is not genuine, and that they must face a substantial loss, the Company's only resource will be cut off."

"Very interesting, Treadway," Norton commented; . . "go on."

"If, on the other hand, matters are not disturbed, within six months everything will straighten out. These notes of mine, when presented, will either be retired by me, or renewed."

"I shan't even have to sign the renewals, shall I?" Norton inquired scornfully.

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"Except for such renewals as are necessary," Treadway continued, unruffled by the stinging sarcasm, "I shall of course issue no new notes . . . I give you my word of honor."

"Your word of honor!" the old man repeated with emphasis. "Very ingenious, Treadway . . . Your abilities are too great to be wasted on so insignificant a position as you now hold. The State calls for your services. I will no longer stand between you and your destiny!"

Norton reached for the telephone, called the police department, and asked that an officer be sent at once to his office.

"You wouldn't do that!" Treadway cried, surprised by the suddenness of his action.

"I have done it," Norton replied with finality.

Treadway's face darkened as he rose to his feet. Irresolutely he went to his own desk and seated himself, Norton's eyes never leaving him. Thus they sat for several moments.

III

Suddenly the tense silence was broken by a commotion in the outer office. There was the sound of broken glass, of furniture being thrown about, and the angry voices of men.

"The boss . . . the boss!" they shouted; "we want the boss!"

"See what that is, Treadway," Norton instructed him. "Tell them I am not to be disturbed."

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The secretary opened the door, and then as suddenly shut and locked it.

"The strikers!" he cried; "they're running amuck!"

"Open that door!" Norton commanded.

"We're skunks, are we? . . . We're afraid of the boss, are we?" came the strident voices from outside.

"Open that door!" the old man again ordered, but seeing Treadway's alarm he strode from his desk and opened it himself.

"Here is the boss," he cried; "who wants him?"

Norton's unexpected appearance and his defiant attitude caused those who stood nearer the door to fall back. This encouraged Treadway to leave his desk and take his customary position beside his chief, but before doing so he took a revolver from the drawer and slipped it into his pocket.

"Well, . . . here I am. What do you want?" Norton again demanded.

There was no sign of fear in the old man's bearing as he faced the disorderly mob. He was still master of his men, and the stern glance of his eye intimidated them as it always had. Those who stood in front of him were silent, but from the rear came answers to his question.

"We want our rights, and we're goin' to get 'em!"

"We're skunks, are we?"

"You want to make our bellies empty!"

Norton turned on them, his voice trembling with anger.

"Yes; you're skunks!" he cried. "I said it, and I mean it. If you weren't, you wouldn't be here where

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you don't belong. You'd bite the hand that feeds you, would you? Well . . . for what you've done today you'll never have a job in this plant again. Now get to that door before I get to you!"

A few of the men fell back in the face of the violence of his words and attitude, but Tony Lemholtz pushed his way through the mass and stood menacingly before him.

"When we go out that door," he threatened, "you'll go with us, . . and it's a coat of tar and feathers for you!"

Before Norton could make reply, another figure elbowed its way to where Tony stood, causing a momentary diversion.

"So you've come back at last," Tony sneered, as he recognized him. "You're just in time to see your highbrow theories put in practice."

With a single blow, into which Richard concentrated all his remaining strength, he stretched Tony in a heap at his feet. Then he turned to the strikers.

"Do you realize what you're doing?" he cried. "Violence will put back the cause of labor twenty years. Give way, and let me talk to my father."

With Tony's downfall the aggressive attitude weakened. He had regained his feet, but for the time being showed little further interest in the proceedings.

"Father," Richard appealed to the belligerent old man. "Don't hold this up against the men. It is all wrong, and they know it; but they have suffered, and this man here"—pointing at Lemholtz—"has incited them beyond their reason. Let it stand, I beg of you,

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as a terrible mistake, but also as an evidence of the depth of their conviction that they have rights which have not yet been recognized. Tell them that you will again take their demands under consideration. Set them an example of moderation. It is your son who asks it."

"My son!" Norton cried. "I have no son. Except for you, this disgraceful affair would never have occurred. You have brains, and you have loaned them to these numskulls, you have encouraged them to turn themselves from respectful, efficient workmen into ruffians. I repeat," . . he shouted, . . "not one of you skunks . . you carrion shall ever have a job in this plant again."

The mob surged forward angrily at his words, pushing Richard, Lemholtz, and Sterling through the door of the private office. Sterling aided Richard in his efforts to force the men back, and Treadway, emboldened by the reinforcements, joined them, leaving Norton standing by himself, leaning against his desk, . . angry, and defiant. But the strikers were not so easily repulsed.

"Come on, boys," Lemholtz cried exultantly, keeping well beyond the reach of Richard's arm, . . "come on now and get the boss! We'll make him eat his words. These traitors can't hold us back!"

Backwards and forwards the mob surged, Norton himself being the only one apart from the jostling crowd. Suddenly, without warning, a shot rang out, Norton's body gave a convulsive quiver, and then crumpled into a heap on the floor. Richard sprang forward instinctively, but Treadway seized him by the

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arm and held him back. At the same moment there was the sound of a falling object upon the floor.

"Stand back . . . you hypocrite!" Treadway commanded, pointing to the uniformed official who was pushing the strikers one side. "Leave everything as it is. The officer will take charge . . . Mr. Norton telephoned for you when he heard that the strikers were on their way," he explained; "but you have come too late."

Silence fell on the mob as the officer examined the body. Then he rose.

"He is dead," he announced. "Who shot him?"

Treadway pointed to an army revolver which lay on the floor.

"That may help to answer your question," he remarked.

"Whose is it?" the officer demanded, picking up the weapon.

"Ask Richard Norton," Treadway suggested.

"Is this yours?"

The officer showed the revolver to Richard, who examined it carefully. The crowd awaited his reply in tense expectation.

"Yes," he answered, as he located a mark on the butt; "it is the gun I used in France. But . . ."

"Anything you say, Mr. Norton, will be used against you," the officer cautioned him. "You are under arrest!"

CHAPTER XX

I

THE DEATH of James Norton made it necessary for the town of Norcross to take a new inventory of itself. When for twenty-five years one man has dominated every motion a community makes, it is inevitable that his loss should be distinctly felt. The shock of the tragedy shook the town to its depths, and actually changed its personality. Yet it was not many days before the topic of conversation veered from the dead to the living.

Richard Norton was confined in the county jail, indicted by the Grand Jury and held for the murder of his father. The town was split into factions on the question of his innocence or guilt. Those who held him to be the murderer recounted the endless misunderstandings between Richard and his father, and the final parting in anger. Clerks in the counting-room of the plant recalled the many humiliations he had suffered at his father's hands. The strikers bore testimony to the importance Richard attached to the new industrial relations he had endeavored to establish for them, and his overwhelming chagrin when James Norton gave the matter such scant courtesy. Those who were

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present at the tragedy pointed out the provocation given by the violence of the old man's reply to his son; and, finally and conclusively, there was the army revolver, which Richard acknowledged to be his own.

The silent testimony given by this relic of the great war was the one thing which Richard's friends could not explain away. Everything else was circumstantial. The shot might have been fired by Sterling, Treadway, or Lemholtz, who stood between James Norton and that surging mob, as well as by Richard. Any one of these men might have been armed, and except for Treadway, the old man's virulent abuse might supply the motive. It was in Richard's favor that he had just cautioned the men against violence. His words were sufficient evidence that he knew how seriously such an act would injure the position of the men, and all agreed that the interests of the workmen constituted the great, dominating force in his life at this time. The improbability of his guilt was easily established, . . . but there was the revolver! To maintain the hypothesis of innocence established by Richard's friends, the presence of the weapon must be ignored.

II

The body of James Norton had scarcely been removed by the coroner before Treadway sought out Henry Cross. The question of those accusing notes must be settled to prevent the knowledge of their existence from being shared by the public.

"I have called upon a very painful errand," Treadway announced.

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Henry Cross regarded him steadily. His presence solved a problem to which Cross had devoted much anxious thought since the news of Norton's death reached him. Being in ignorance of what had actually occurred before the tragedy took place, he was still trying to decide how he should act to protect his interests. Treadway's call relieved him of his uncertainty.

"Very painful, I should say," he replied deliberately; "particularly to you!"

"Yes," Treadway acquiesced; "yet it would be more unpleasant if during the few moments preceding Mr. Norton's death he had not shown himself in his true colors."

Cross waited for his caller to continue, but for some moments Treadway seemed absorbed in melancholy thoughts. At last Cross's patience was rewarded.

"Do you mind telling me what Mr. Norton said to you about those notes?" Treadway asked.

"He said they were forgeries."

Cross's temper again began to rise.

"Did he accuse any one?"

"Yes, you . . . double-crosser; he accused you!"

Treadway rose quickly to his feet.

"Please, Mr. Cross!" he protested . . . "please reserve your judgment until you know the facts. This is more serious than I supposed. Did he actually accuse me by name?"

"No," Cross admitted after a moment's thought and striving to be scrupulously exact: "I can't say he called you by name, but he certainly meant you."

Treadway seemed relieved.

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"I could not really believe that he made a definite accusation, for he knew better; but I suspected from what he said to me that he had thrown aspersions upon my character. I realized, of course, that Mr. Norton was personally in a desperate situation, but it never occurred to me that he would undertake to cast suspicion on an innocent man to divert attention from himself."

"Do you mean to imply that in spite of what James Norton told me the signatures on those notes are genuine?"

"It is painful to make these statements when they affect the reputation of a man now dead," Treadway replied with apparent reluctance; "but it is my due that you at least should know the truth. I see no reason to smirch his name outside, so I depend upon your discretion . . . Of course James Norton signed those notes! His pride was hurt that I had raised money for the Company when he had failed, yet he knew that except for my success the Company would have been sorely pressed. It is evident now that he planned to get rid of me, and to have me leave under a cloud. Just how he expected to accomplish this, with my own reputation unblemished, is not clear, but the intent is obvious. Fate, however, intervened."

Henry Cross had experienced many sensations since he first presented the notes to Norton. At the present moment his apprehension of financial loss appeared to be relieved, and he breathed easier.

"Every cent due on those notes will be paid at maturity," Treadway declared with increasing confidence.

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"If it will make you feel more comfortable, I will endorse them personally."

"I can't understand it," Cross mused. "I never liked Norton, but I did believe him honest."

"Power turned his head, Mr. Cross. He had come to believe that whatever he did was right because he did it. We meet people like that sometimes, don't we? Then, when his affairs became involved, he found it necessary to do certain things to extricate himself which under ordinary conditions he would never have thought of doing. Life itself is a paradox, Mr. Cross. I imagine that with any of us, if his acts were analyzed, some things would come to light which he would prefer to have remain in the background."

Without committing himself, Cross acquiesced. While Treadway was explaining the situation his mind had been active. Was it possible that Norton had lied about his signature? It seemed incredible, yet other men, looked upon as upright pillars of society, had proved themselves unworthy when faced by personal disaster. Treadway was in a position to know the facts, and he guaranteed the payment of the notes. Whatever else might be confused, the fact that the money was safe appeared clear.

"It's the greatest shock I've ever had in all my life," Cross admitted. "James Norton, . . . deacon in the church, president of the bank, looked upon as our leading citizen . . ."

"You haven't known him as I have," Treadway interrupted, . . . "but of the dead, let us remember only the good."

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"That's the Christian way to look at it, I suppose, but I'm shocked . . . I can't help it."

III

Now, two weeks after the tragedy, Treadway was breathing easily again. He looked back upon his experience with James Norton that tragic day with mortification and chagrin. To have handled his affairs in such a manner as to make detection possible evidenced the fact that as yet he had not acquired the *finesse* he demanded of himself. He had actually been face to face with arrest and prosecution as a common criminal! If Norton had mentioned over the telephone why the officer had been summoned, if Norton had confided his knowledge of the forgeries to any except one whose interest it was to regard the signature as genuine, if Norton's accusing voice had not been stilled! Treadway felt the sensations of one who, stumbling on the brink of a precipice, experiences the sinking exhaustion of imminent destruction, and suddenly finds himself firmly on solid ground again. The horrid dream was over! He found relief from the shock in the added responsibilities which came to him at the office, and he plunged into the work with an energy which attracted universal approval.

IV

The Stewart family were stunned by the news of the tragedy, but Richard's innocence was implicitly accepted. Knowing him as they did, such an act on his part was unthinkable. Yet when they attempted to

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go beyond this simple declaration of faith, they encountered the same stultifying mystery as did Richard's other friends. To Lola, the blow, while staggering, came as a steadying influence. There were no hysterics. Her comrade was in danger, and she rallied to his defence. Again William Stewart was commandeered as aide, but to Lola's surprise and delight, she discovered that he had already acted upon his own initiative.

"Dick can do nothing for himself," she said. "There is no one to lift a finger for him but ourselves."

"I have already engaged counsel," Stewart told her. "We will fight for him as if he were our own son. The truth is bound to be discovered. If we could only dismiss that accusing revolver!"

"You don't believe he did it?" she demanded.

"No, dear; my faith is as strong as yours. There must be some explanation, and that is what we shall seek . . . Norton dead! I can't realize it even now!"

Treadway called to express his sympathy, and Lola's attitude demonstrated beyond a doubt her unwavering devotion to Richard which Treadway tried to convince himself had lessened. Under these circumstances he showed a tenderness and consideration for which Lola had not given him credit; yet his frank assumption of Richard's guilt proved disconcerting, and added to the girl's apprehensions.

"We must not blame Dick too harshly," Treadway said soothingly. "No one knows better than I the daily provocation he suffered, and that was bound to wear down even a strong nature like his."

"That is assuming that he did it," Lola protested.

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Treadway shrugged his shoulders sympathetically, but did not retract his statement.

"He was weakened by his illness," he replied, avoiding a direct answer; "he saw the work he had done being destroyed by his father's obstinacy; he was beside himself with disappointment. I am sure that a plea of temporary insanity will save him."

Stewart, seeing the expression on Lola's face, joined them.

"Just where do you stand, Treadway?" he inquired.

"Why . . . of course I'm friendly to Richard," he explained; "but I am held as a witness, and I have to tell what I saw."

"Did you actually see Richard fire the shot?" Stewart asked abruptly.

"No," Treadway answered after great deliberation; "I can't say flatly that I did. There were several of us standing close together . . ."

"Sterling and Lemholtz were on the other side of Richard, were they not?" Stewart inquired.

"Yes; and I was on his right. The mob was pushing us from behind, after Mr. Norton made the statement which so infuriated them, and we all were trying to hold them back. Then the shot was fired, and the revolver fell on the floor . . ."

"Go on," Stewart urged as Treadway paused, eager to have the scene reconstructed by an eye-witness. "In the surging of the men around you it is impossible to state definitely that any particular person fired the shot, but you believe it to have been Richard?"

Treadway nodded. "The weapon was very close to

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me when it was discharged, and . . . it was Dick's gun."

"We come up against that accursed revolver every time!" Stewart admitted. "Is there any chance that Lemholtz might have secured it in some way?"

"I suppose anything is possible," Treadway answered without committing himself.

"Lemholtz is the kind of man who would like nothing better than to throw suspicion on Richard by way of revenge," the older man added.

"I wish we could shift the responsibility onto him," Treadway answered, shaking his head doubtfully; "but I fear we can't. The evidence is too direct."

Lola sat in silence during the conversation between Treadway and her father, losing not a word, her eyes shifting from one to the other as each spoke. Her face was pale and set, and her determination strengthened as she listened to the incriminating evidence Treadway was to give at Richard's trial. This determination found voice as her father completed his cross-examination.

"Richard Norton did not kill his father!"

The girl spoke with such finality that both men turned sharply, Treadway with some apprehension, and waited for her to continue. A statement so definite required explanation. She sensed the significance of their questioning looks.

"No," she replied to the unspoken query; "you would probably call it woman's intuition, but it is far more than that. There are some things I know and some things I know I know. You wouldn't understand. It is something that came to us over there in France. Liv-

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ing as we did in the constant presence of death, I suppose the real things of life became clearer to us. After I have seen Richard I shall know better what to do, for that power of understanding came to him just as it did to me; . . but it was not Dick who fired that shot."

V

Lola's confidence was a bulwark of strength to her father. There had been a few instances, like the present, when he had seen in her face a conviction which comes only to those who experience the fervor of a religious rite. At such times his daughter seemed separated from those around her by something beyond what he could explain but which he was compelled to respect. This new phase of Lola's life was brought to Stewart's mind when, several Sundays before, the minister had announced his text, "Now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face." Was it possible that as compensation to those who ministered to the travelers during their journey through the valley of the shadow of death, the glass was made at least partially transparent? There had been times when Lola's judgment had been so uncanny that Stewart believed the gift had been bestowed on her, and when she spoke of her faith in Richard with that all-including confidence, her father would have accepted her judgment against all the evidence in the world.

Treadway, however, saw nothing unusual in Lola's explanation. Women are always emotional, and this was but another example of their unreasoning championship of the unfortunate. But he was too expe-

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rienced a diplomat to differ from her at this moment. For the time being Richard would naturally receive her undivided thought and sympathy, . . but county jails are not the most fortunate trysting-places, nor do convicted felons long retain the affection of girls brought up as Lola Stewart. Treadway was content to bide his time.

CHAPTER XXI

I

ON the day of the tragedy, Olga had followed Richard to the plant with serious misgivings.

She was present when Sterling brought the news that Tony had gained the upper hand, and that the strikers were on their way to the office to demand a reckoning with James Norton. She had seen the angry color come in Richard's cheeks as he apprehensively left the flat, brushing her aside as she tried to argue against his going. She was with the mob at the rear of the office when James Norton denounced his son. She heard the fatal shot, and when the officer forced his way through the crowd, she slipped into his wake and gained a position near the front. She was just behind Richard when the revolver was shown him for identification, she heard his acknowledgment, and witnessed his arrest.

Then a glance at Richard's face took Olga's mind from the tragedy, for she knew what that look meant. Quickly separating herself from the crowd, she hastened to Dr. Thurber's office and implored him to go with her to the county jail, where they arrived only a few moments after the prisoner and his guard.

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Richard's collapse in his cell made his removal to the infirmary imperative. Dr. Thurber was permitted to act in consultation, and Olga was admitted under his protecting patronage. When the patient was made as comfortable as possible, the doctor turned to her.

"You gave me to understand that this man was your husband. Now I understand that he is Richard Norton."

"What difference does his name make so long as he needs you?" she pleaded, fearful lest the doctor give up the case.

"I'll look after him all right," he reassured her; "but where do you come in?"

"Never mind about me," she cried pitifully . . . "Will he live?"

"I don't know that it makes much difference," Dr. Thurber replied with unintentional cruelty. "From what they tell me we'll be simply saving him for the chair."

Olga stifled a scream, and her eyes filled with horror. Her mind had been so painfully occupied by Richard's collapse that the significance of his arrest for the moment entirely escaped her.

"He did it, didn't he?" the doctor demanded abruptly.

"Of course," Olga answered proudly. "What else could he do when his father called us carrion? But they won't send him to the chair for sticking up for us. He fought for us in France."

Dr. Thurber shrugged his shoulders. Nothing could be gained by combating the girl's mistaken faith. There was no question in Olga's mind that Richard had fired

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the fatal shot. It was what she would have done, and she considered the act as consummate self-abnegation and further evidence of his devotion to the cause. Tony Lemholtz might talk and rave, but it took a man to act as Richard had!

"Well," Dr. Thurber said finally, "there's enough to think about now without going into the family relations; but if you're not his wife this is no place for you."

"I may come back and see him?" Olga begged, terror-stricken at the thought that she would be separated from her charge.

"It depends on whether he wants you after he's strong enough to see any one. That won't be for a week or two at best."

"Who will nurse him as I have all this time?"

"The officials will look after that."

Olga regarded him with reproach, but there was no yielding in the doctor's face. His thoughts were centered on more than the case before him. The engagement existing between Richard Norton and Lola Stewart was well known throughout the town, and Dr. Thurber was trying to reconstruct the situation as it was affected by "Mr. and Mrs. Richards." As this was a case which could not be relieved by pills, powders, or prescriptions, the doctor found it somewhat baffling.

II

It was another fortnight before the patient's brain cleared. Dr. Thurber was sitting beside his cot, feel-

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ing his pulse, gratified by the steady improvement. As he turned, he saw that Richard's eyes were open, and in them was an expression of intelligence which announced to the doctor's trained sense that normal conditions had returned.

"Hello, doctor," Richard greeted him cheerfully. "I'm glad to see you . . . I've just had a horrible dream."

Before an answer could be made the patient's glance took in the surroundings. Richard raised himself on his elbow and the smile of greeting upon his face changed into ghastly realization.

"Then it wasn't a dream, doctor?" he demanded slowly.

As Dr. Thurber shook his head Richard sank back, but only for a moment.

"My father is really dead?" he asked . . . "Poor old dad!" he added as the doctor nodded.

After a few moments' silence he continued.

"I can't seem to think of my father as being dead, doctor. It doesn't seem possible that such a personality as his could ever cease to exist. He never understood me, and I don't suppose I understood him, but he was a wonderful man."

Dr. Thurber studied his patient carefully. This was no incoherent rambling. It was evident that the mind had entirely cleared; yet the words were surprising in view of the circumstances. The doctor carefully jotted them down for future reference.

"Don't think too much," he cautioned Richard. "You have been very ill, and you'll need all your

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strength. You will be able to see some of your friends now within a day or two."

But a flood of thought once started is not thus easily checked by a word of caution. Richard's eyes again fell on the grey stone walls, and his mind leaped to reconstruct the present situation.

"I was accused of shooting my father!" he cried suddenly. "I was arrested and I am now in jail. Tell me, doctor, is all that true?"

"Yes, it is true," Dr. Thurber admitted; "but let us talk about that tomorrow. Your strength won't stand it all at once."

"It is too awful . . ." horror filled Richard's voice . . . "it is too awful even to think . . . that I would do anything to harm my father!"

"He was shot with your revolver," the doctor said significantly, feeling it to be his duty to get the reaction of this moment.

"I haven't had that gun in my possession since I left home," Richard declared with such emphasis that Dr. Thurber started. He had dreaded this moment of awakening, for he felt certain that the prisoner would involuntarily make some damaging statement which would add to his own moral responsibility.

"If that is true, you have nothing to worry about," he replied reassuringly. "Now try to forget, and a little later Mr. Stewart will want you to tell him everything."

"Miss Stewart doesn't believe it, does she?"

"No; the Stewarts have absolute faith in you."

"Thank God for that! Now I can forget it; but,

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doctor, please have Miss Stewart and her father come to see me as soon as you can."

"If you rest well tonight, that may be tomorrow."

III

So the morrow brought added strength to the patient and encouragement in the person of Lola. She asked her father to postpone his visit, so that this first meeting might be sacred to themselves.

"Keep the conversation off the situation itself as much as you can," Dr. Thurber cautioned Lola. "He does not realize his unfortunate position as yet, and it is just as well."

It seemed to each of them as if ages had passed since last they met. Lola was shocked to see the physical change in Richard. He was pale and thin, and his attenuated features gave him the appearance of an ascetic. In his bearing the change was even greater. When they were last together, a buoyant enthusiasm replaced the former restlessness and uncertainty. Now this had disappeared, and in its place had come a calmness indicating the new poise which the experiences of the past few weeks had given him. Here in confinement, charged with the gravest crime civilized society recognizes, a peace seemed to have fallen on Richard which Lola had never seen before.

"I'm glad you came alone," he said simply after greeting her. "The doctor told me that your faith in me was unshaken, so we don't need to talk about this terrible affair yet . . . Of course I shall be freed. I didn't do it, so they can't convict me . . . Poor old

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dad! But before I do anything for myself I must tell you how troubled I have been these weeks while I have been so ill, not to be able to exchange ideas with you. It was this illness that gave me the first chance I have had to think since I lay on my back at Toul, . . . but what a change in the picture!"

Lola was surprised and relieved to find Richard so confident of his acquittal. Dr. Thurber saw in this merely a lack of realization; she knew now that it was born of faith based on innocence, and any lingering doubt inspired by Treadway's testimony faded away. Still she was puzzled by his attitude toward her. He was frankly overjoyed to see her, yet there was an impersonality about their meeting which evidenced a changed relation.

"I knew nothing of your illness, Dick," she explained solicitously. "You know I would have gone to you."

"I know you would, but that was impossible. Olga did for me more than any one else could have done. That lodging house would have been no place for you . . ."

"At least we might have taken you to our house . . ."

"Let's forget about ourselves . . . We have greater things to talk about."

"Yes, dear," she humored him. "After all, we are only atoms, you and I, in this great scheme of life which has been unfolded before us."

Richard looked at her admiringly.

"You are a wonderful girl, Lola," he exclaimed. "It was you who pulled me back to my best self . . . it

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was you who kept me from losing all I had gained. I really believed that our marriage was the only thing that could reconcile me to conditions as I found them; you stood firm for the greater purpose which lay before us. Now I see it clearly . . . How unimportant is any personal gratification compared with this opportunity to serve!"

"It was your vision, Dick, which gave me my perspective. If I have helped . . . even a little . . . to bring that to a realization, what a satisfaction it will be to us in later years. . . how much it will help to make our lives together worth while!"

"Yes," he acknowledged; . . . "but, as you said, the life together is of minor importance, and the work as I see it ahead of me now seems almost greater than can be accomplished in a lifetime . . . Perhaps we shall never marry, Lola, for we must permit no personal selfishness to interfere with our labors for the common cause. But we can work it out together, and that means even more, doesn't it, dear? I know you feel as I do. You realized that before I did, and you were right."

Lola was deeply affected by Richard's earnestness. It was a shock even to suggest that perhaps they might never marry. The woman in her asked unanswerable questions raised by his mention of Olga, . . . but deeper than all was the unalterable conviction that she was in the presence of that Great Thing which she had previously felt, now for the first time made tangible. Over there, a life or a thousand lives meant nothing if an objective was to be gained. Of what importance now

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was her life or Richard's if real service demanded it! Is not service the yardstick by which human character is measured, and the crucible in which human character is tested? Is not the apotheosis of service that which requires personal sacrifice?

"We must get you away from here first, Dick," she said quietly. "Then we will work it out together."

"Of course."

"How much do you want to tell me now?" she asked.

"I don't like to think of myself even to that extent . . . I want to tell you everything, but it must develop by degrees. To any one else it would sound brutal, but I'm wondering if the death of my poor old dad isn't a part of the working out, . . . if it isn't the only way he could contribute to the great common cause. Do I shock you, Lola? Why not believe that today, with the broader vision which has come to him, he is really beside me, helping his son to play his part at this crisis, and rejoicing that he unwittingly has played his? As I think of him now, Lola, I forget all that made trouble between us. I am conscious only of his strength and his integrity of purpose. Think what we could have done together if he had seen the light before he passed beyond! I'll believe that he will still give me of his power to help me accomplish my great desire."

IV

Dr. Thurber entered the ward and interrupted their conversation.

"I was afraid you would overstay your time, young lady," he said; "yet from the expression on my pa-

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tient's face I can see that no harm has been done."

"No harm can ever come from Miss Stewart's visits, doctor," Richard declared; . . . "she and I have a work to do together which nothing must interrupt."

"Not even the due exercise of the functions of the law, I suppose," Dr. Thurber remarked dryly, with an expression which Lola understood to be confirmation of his belief that Richard failed to comprehend the gravity of the situation. "There are some formalities which remain to be gone through, and Mr. Stewart and your attorney will probably ask Miss Stewart to share you with them for a time. Keep on gaining your strength, and you will be able to increase your visiting-list. Within a few days you will be returned to your cell, but after that I recommend that everything possible be done to bring about a change of scene."

CHAPTER XXII

I

IF THE Norton Manufacturing Company had been deprived of its guiding genius prior to the meeting of its Board of Directors at which William Stewart ventured to take issue with Norton, he would have been the last member of the Board, in spite of his large holding of stock, to be considered in the reorganization now necessitated. As it was, the other Directors turned to Stewart as, next to Norton, the outstanding figure in the Company. During all these years of close association they had never really known him, and it had required that single hour of self-assertion to disclose the real Stewart, and to correct the previous impression that his dreaming expressed rather than concealed his personality. And William Stewart found the new experience of leading instead of following a sensation as agreeable as it was novel.

The tragedy forced a truce in the hostilities between the Company and the men. The strikers were dazed by the sudden removal of the dominating figure which had ruled them for so many years. The bitterness many of them had felt became tempered by the grim fact that this man whom they had regarded as their

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personal enemy had paid the supreme price for his dogged determination to have his own way. More than that no man could do. Tony Lemholtz and his radicals were now deprived of a target for their vituperative slings. The new management might later provide one, but at present there was nothing to do except await developments. Without the inciting influence of radical leadership, labor is always reasonable, so there remained no obstacle to the proposal for arbitration which was promptly issued by the management.

Under these circumstances conditions gradually approached normal in the works. The strike-breakers were dismissed, the men returned to their machines, and the great industry of the town, as far as outward appearances went, proceeded at slackened speed but in due fashion as if no untoward event had threatened to destroy even its massive foundations. The smoke curling listlessly from the tall chimneys at first seemed ironical in its tranquility, but Norcross soon accepted it as a symbol that man is but a fleeting incident in the life of a community.

Inside the works affairs were not as tranquil as the curling smoke might seem to indicate. James Norton had kept within himself so much of the routine of the business that to unravel it without his aid was a vexatious undertaking. Treadway proved to be of the greatest assistance, for he had stood nearest to the master, and possessed at least a superficial knowledge of the workings of the great man's mind. On him, therefore, fell the chief burden of the executive management, and he met his new responsibilities with an energy

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and ability which delighted the Directors. Alec Sterling was fully competent to handle the manufacturing end of the business, so gradually affairs straightened out at least to the extent of conducting the Company without jeopardy until the proper successor to James Norton could be found.

II

Stewart, as chairman of the Board, was in no haste to discover this successor. Richard Norton, as his father's heir, was now the chief stockholder in the Company, and his wishes in the matter must be consulted. If Richard was acquitted, as Stewart believed he must be, there was much to say in favor of considering him as the logical incumbent of James Norton's position. This might mean a tempering of his advanced ideas or a revision of the attitude always taken by the Directors in their relations toward the employees, or a compromise between the two; but whatever might be the final outcome, Stewart was determined that Richard's interests in the Company should be carefully safeguarded.

In talking the matter over with Treadway, Stewart encountered his first obstacle . . . should Richard return, the former secretary made it quite clear that he would retire from the Company. Stewart realized that because of Treadway's value to the business this threatened action would carry much weight against his plan when presented to the Directors.

"Why do you take this attitude, Treadway?" he in-

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quired. "Had there been any trouble between you and Richard?"

"Not the slightest," was the emphatic response. "Personally I should be glad to see Dick take what seems to be his logical position in the Company, and I should be willing to work with him if I could. But the fact remains that we differ so radically in our ideas of conducting a business that our relations would be intolerable. I see nothing but failure ahead if his ideas were permitted to dominate, and of course I couldn't afford to injure my personal reputation by becoming part of a failure, even though I was in no way responsible for it."

"I am sorry to have you oppose me in this," Stewart said frankly; "my heart is set on it."

"Aren't we crossing our bridge before we come to it?" Treadway asked. "There is no question whatever that Richard shot his father. The only possible escape for him is through a plea of insanity, and if that prevails he will of course prefer to live anywhere rather than in Norcross. Whichever way the trial results, it seems to me that the facts themselves preclude the remotest possibility of his returning here."

"You may be right," Stewart admitted reluctantly, "but I fervently hope that you are not. Nothing but his own admission will ever convince me that Richard Norton is the guilty man."

"I fear your faith is based too much on Lola's confidence, Mr. Stewart; but the unfortunate facts remain."

"There are no facts as yet . . . beyond the murder itself. The evidence is purely circumstantial . . ."

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"You forget the gun . . ."

"But no one actually saw Richard use it . . . I understand that from a strategic position any one of four of you might have used it."

"I saw him fire the shot, Mr. Stewart!"

The older man started violently.

"You told me, in Lola's presence, that you did not see the shot fired."

Treadway regarded him steadily for a moment.

"I also made the same statement in my testimony before the Grand Jury," he said calmly.

"You perjured yourself . . ."

"You would have done the same under similar circumstances. Richard Norton has been my friend. His father was my benefactor. The situation is desperate enough for Dick at best. Until now, I have kept my own counsel, for with the truth once shared by any one, the danger to Richard is increased. But I know that it is safe with you. I have told you in order to save you unnecessary embarrassment later, and to impress you with the importance of entering a plea of temporary insanity."

Stewart was staggered, and he glanced nervously around as if seeking some avenue of escape from the damning testimony he had just heard.

"I may have to make this statement at the trial," Treadway continued; "but I hope not. I am not afraid of suffering from perjury charges. Every one knows of my peculiar relation to the Norton family, and will appreciate the fact that I tried to protect my friend. If Richard's guilt is admitted, and his temporary irre-

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sponsibility established, it will be the best solution for all concerned."

"Of course Richard's counsel must know this. You are not binding me to secrecy to that extent?"

"No," Treadway replied, seeming to hesitate for a moment; . . . "he should have all the facts in his possession, of course. I should think that what I have just told you would influence his attitude. I will even talk the matter over with him if you think it wise."

"I *cannot* believe what you tell me, Treadway. It isn't that I question your words, but rather your eyesight. I start with the hypothesis that Richard is innocent, so you may very properly say that I am prejudiced . . . Have you ever listened to the contradictory statements made by equally conscientious witnesses of an automobile accident?"

Treadway shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not trying to convict Richard," he explained. "I wish the burden of testimony might be removed from me to some one less intimately associated with the family. But I was present at the time, I saw what I did see, I am held as a material witness, and I must answer the questions that are put to me."

"Of course . . . of course . . ." Stewart agreed. "I understand all that . . . and I'm not sure that I wholly approve of your perjuring yourself before the Grand Jury, still your loyalty to the Norton family does you credit. I have not recovered yet from the shock you gave me, but the lawyer will know what is best to do. If Richard actually shot his father, he deserves . . . but no, Treadway, I will not believe it!

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In all that confusion you were deceived, and the fact that it was Richard's gun confirmed you in your false impression . . . But we'll drop the matter of the boy's relation to the business until the truth is established."

CHAPTER XXIII

I

WHEN TREADWAY assumed charge of James Norton's private office he discovered several papers the existence of which had previously been unknown to him. The one which proved to be of greatest interest to him personally was a codicil to his chief's will which canceled the original bequest of all his property to his son, leaving him only the house on the Hill and a legacy of ten thousand dollars. Treadway had always hoped that this might be the outcome of Norton's quarrel with Richard, but as no such suggestion had ever been made, it was a happy surprise to find himself named as a beneficiary to the extent of the old man's holdings in the Company and in the bank.

The realization which came to Treadway of the power and position this wealth would give him was almost overwhelming; but why had the codicil never been delivered to the executors? Norton had evidently caused it to be drawn immediately after Richard left home, but for some reason had postponed placing it with his will. Had this been due to a lingering affection for the boy, a hope of reconciliation in spite of their differences; had Norton been too occupied with other matters, or was

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it simply an oversight? These questions could never be answered now, but Treadway preferred to assume that the newly-discovered document represented Norton's unalterable intention, and that it was his secretary's personal duty to prevent the accident of his death from causing a miscarriage of his obvious desires.

When, therefore, James Norton's will was duly probated, the codicil, properly signed and witnessed, was included. No one questioned the old man's change of heart. In view of all that had happened, the codicil was more obvious than the original document. Richard's friends were sympathetic but not surprised, the Directors of the Company were relieved, since Richard was not to be the heir, to have the stock fall into the hands of some one familiar with its affairs; the public spoke of Treadway's "luck"; and James Norton's erstwhile secretary settled down as the logical successor of the Great Man of Norcross.

II

Henry Cross watched the new turn of affairs with considerable interest. His experiences with Treadway had not predisposed him in his favor. Cross had hated Norton with the accumulated venom of over twenty years, but beneath that hatred was the inevitable respect which one strong man feels for another, whatever the differences in their religious, political, or business creeds. He had believed Norton when he told him that his signature was forged. The shock which came to him when Treadway flatly proclaimed his late chief a liar and a crook later gave way to incredulity. As a matter

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of fact, Norton and Treadway had been very much in Cross's mind ever since the tragedy.

Treadway now represented the Norton interests at the meetings of the bank. Here Cross came into frequent contact with him, and found him modest and unassuming in wearing his new dignities.

"I little thought when I agreed to get you that stock," Treadway confided to him one day, "that it would be so prejudicial to my personal interests; but a promise is a promise, and you shall be the next president of the Norcross National Bank."

All this was gratifying to Henry Cross's ambitions, but with their realization close at hand, he found his satisfaction less than he had anticipated. It was one thing to assume the position he had long coveted without contest, and another to have forced James Norton, at the height of his arrogance, out of his chair at the head of that long mahogany table. The memory of the last meeting with his rival still proved disconcerting. He had seen the strong man weaken, he had seen the chilled steel pierced, and had been given a glimpse of human clay beneath, which he had not believed was there. If James Norton had lied to him during that conference, then Cross had been in the presence of the most consummate actor of his time; and if he had not lied . . .

Herein lay the disconcerting element. Was his instinctive distrust of William Treadway justified, and in which direction did his duty lie? Duty was still spelled with capital letters in Henry Cross's New England conscience, and he earnestly prayed that he had not yielded

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to temptation in accepting Treadway's words at their par value.

Treadway himself was actively engaged in strengthening the fortifications in his new position. If he could have foreseen that his dream of wealth and power was to be gratified without his personal effort, there would have been no occasion for him to take chances by marking the cards. Now it was important for his future welfare that these silent witnesses be removed from the pack. The forged notes held by those other than Henry Cross could easily be retired on presentation without attracting attention, but the Cross notes still represented a danger point. Treadway believed that the old man's suspicions had been allayed, but it was the act of wisdom to make assurance doubly sure.

"In view of what has happened," he said quietly to Cross after one of the meetings at the bank, "I should be glad to take up those notes you hold without waiting for their maturity."

This remark caused that troublesome New England conscience of Henry Cross further twinges. If the notes were all right, why should Treadway suggest retiring them? They represented an obligation of the Company, and Treadway's only personal responsibility was his endorsement, which should cause him no concern. Treadway's manner intimated that his suggestion was made as a favor to Cross, but the old man was not wholly convinced as to the younger man's altruistic interest. Henry Cross invoked Divine guidance, in answer to which the still small voice became a shrill calliope, clamoring for attention. The responsibility

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became too great for him to bear alone. He removed the disturbing documents from his safe-deposit box, placed them in his inside pocket, and made a special trip to the metropolis to lay them before a hand-writing expert.

III

It happened to be Olga who brought to Richard the news of his disinheritance. Among whom, in a manufacturing town, does news or rumors of news travel more rapidly than the working class? At last the girl succeeded in passing Dr. Thurber's guard, for Richard had asked for her, and the doctor could offer no good reason for denying his request. Olga rejoiced in the tidings she had to bring. If there had not been justification before, this unfatherly act supplied it. To her it was conclusive evidence that James Norton had no right to live.

"You mustn't talk like that," Richard restrained her, as she poured out the story after her first passionate tears of greeting. "He was my father, Olga, and whatever our differences, I shall always respect his memory. It was his money, and he knew that I shouldn't use it as he would have wished it to be used. He had a perfect right to leave it to whomever he chose."

Olga looked at Richard in astonishment.

"If you feel that way toward your father, why did you shoot him?" she demanded.

"You don't think I shot him, Olga?"

"Of course. Why shouldn't you? He called us car-
rion, and he gave your money away."

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"Hush." Richard understood this fiery spirit, and realized what lay beneath her primitive attitude. "I'm sorry you could think that of me, Olga, but you don't realize what you are saying."

The girl was undeniably disappointed, and she showed it.

"Then who did do it?" she asked incredulously.

"That we must find out . . . Olga, do you suppose Tony Lemholtz could have got hold of my revolver?"

"If it was where he could reach it, he could. But if you think he shot the boss, forget it. He would not take the chance."

"He might have, in the excitement," Richard insisted. "I saw his face when he got up from the floor."

"He might have killed you . . . from behind," the girl said contemptuously; "but never the boss in the open. He is too yellow."

"We mustn't take anything for granted, Olga. He was the only one there insane enough to commit such a deed . . . But I can't understand where my gun came from. You might be able to find that out for me, Olga. Will you try?"

"Sure I will try," she said promptly; "but if you did not do it, why have they got you here?"

"They think I did it."

"Your word is as good as theirs . . . and better. Where is the cop? I will tell him so."

"Quiet . . . quiet!" Richard calmed her. "You can help me more by doing what I ask."

"Has the Stewart lady been to see you?" she inquired abruptly.

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As he nodded, the girl's eyes snapped jealously.

"Are you going to let her come between us?"

Richard looked at her in surprise. It was the first time Olga had ever suggested a claim upon him, and his immediate reaction was one of annoyance. Then the absurdity of her words became uppermost, and he smiled into her face.

"No, you silly child, . . . the Stewart lady is not going to take your little playmate away from you . . . Why are you so serious today?"

Olga's eyes were snapping, and her whole bearing showed the resentment she felt that he took her words so lightly.

"Because I am serious," she answered him. "I am not a child, and you shall never call me that again. I am a woman, just as the Stewart lady is, and you have no right to treat me like this."

Richard had seen her in temper before, and he sensed nothing in this outburst beyond others which had preceded it. Sometimes he purposely teased her, to see the color come to her cheeks and the fire to her eyes.

"Come here, you little spit-fire," he said, placing his arm around her and drawing her slight form to him. "What do you mean by getting angry with me when I am having so much trouble any way?"

"It is your own fault for not answering my question. I do not like to have you make sport of me . . . I think too much of you for that."

"I only make sport of you when you invite it," he said more seriously. "There has been no change in our friendship since that afternoon at East Lake, except

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that it is stronger. What has Miss Lola to do with it?"

"Everything," the girl answered solemnly. "It is true we sipped the wine as friends long ago, but much has happened since."

"True, but nothing to affect our friendship."

"Then you lived in a different world from mine, now you live in my world; then you were a rich man's son, now you are poor like me; then you were Mr. Richard Norton, now you are my Richard; then we were friends only, now . . ."

"Nonsense!" he interrupted her. "There is no stronger word than friend. Miss Lola is also my friend, yet she would never ask if you were going to come between her and me."

"Her friendship is different . . . she expects you to marry her."

"She expects that no longer, Olga," Richard explained. "I never expect to marry now. I have told her so, and she understands."

"She understands that you no longer love her? . . . Your engagement is broken!" Olga's voice expressed absolute incredulity.

"I didn't say that. I do love Miss Lola . . . You have always known that . . . but now I am face to face with something more important than marriage or love. When I get out of here, I mean to devote my life to putting across what you have heard me talk of for the men. It means sacrifice to me, but I must not think of wife, or home, or children until I have fulfilled the duty I have laid upon myself."

It was difficult for Olga to comprehend Richard's

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statement, but out of the confusion in her mind there came an impression that perhaps the situation was better for her than she had thought.

"You say that you still love the Stewart lady even though you will not marry her," she said slowly, as if trying to put his words into her own language . . . "Does that mean that you do not love me?"

"Of course!" he admitted promptly. "We are friends . . . we have sipped the wine together . . . we are living in each other's lives . . . what could be happier or sweeter?"

The girl clasped her hands about his neck, and looked up into his face. The great brown eyes were wet with unshed tears, the lips quivered, and the voice was low.

"Oh, Richard!" she cried impulsively; "don't you see how different everything is now from what it used to be? Until these last weeks I had not loved any one but myself, but now, . . oh, Richard! While you were so weak and I held your head in my lap, I could close my eyes and think my dream had come true. When you took me in your arms and kissed me . . . didn't you love me then, Richard? Was it only the sip of wine? I know you have never held the Stewart lady like that, nor kissed her as you kiss me. When the good God took your money away, I thought He did it for me, so that we both could be poor and you could marry me . . . Now I am afraid, and that is why I ask if the Stewart lady is to come between us."

"What in the world possesses you today, Olga?" Richard demanded, as he sought to calm her. "What does a little girl like you know about love, any way?"

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You have been worrying so much about me these weeks that some foolish thoughts have crept into your mind . . . You don't love me, Olga . . . you are unstrung over this whole affair, and you are sorry for me. In your sweet anxiety you are still trying to watch over me . . . Don't be silly! I need your friendship now more than I ever did. What you have done for me is beyond what I can ever repay . . . If there were anything serious in what you say I should be terribly concerned, but fortunately we don't have to think of that. I'm not going to marry any one, so that problem needn't cause us any worry . . . You're not suggesting that we should cease to be friends, are you?"

"Oh, no! . . . no . . . no!" Olga cried.

"Then we'll leave things just where they were? . . . We still are comrades, and always will be?"

"You have told the Stewart lady all that you have told me?" she asked again, to make sure that there was no mistake.

"Yes; exactly that. She understands the situation perfectly, and agrees with me."

Olga was quick to realize that if Lola had acquiesced, she would place herself at a disadvantage by refusing to be equally generous. But she could not yield without a last effort to strengthen her position.

"Then I suppose I, too, must agree with you," she said at length; "but really I do not! If the Stewart lady gives you up so easily she cannot love you . . . Perhaps it is because now you are a poor man. I will never believe you do not love me, Richard, but if I make it hard for you now perhaps your love will turn

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to hate. I will be patient . . . But while we wait shall we still sip the wine together?"

"Of course," Richard agreed, relieved to have straightened Olga out. "Everything is mixed up now; but if you will be patient, as you say you will, all is bound to come out right."

"Then you will marry me," Olga said with finality; "for that only is right."

CHAPTER XXIV

I

THE EFFECT on Lola of her visits with Richard was electrifying. Her work in France had impressed her with a sense of obligation, hitherto unknown and unexpressed. The results of her later efforts to give this expression had proved unsatisfying. She had felt the necessity for action and had succeeded in making Richard recognize it, but it was he who at last supplied something tangible which she could grasp. Now the spirit of martyrdom had seized her as it had him.

Fired by the inspiration which comes from a sympathetic listener, Richard put into words for the first time the cumulative results of those days of solitary thought, and his own confidence and enthusiasm were contagious.

"Do you know, Lola," he said to her, "except for what it stands for, this time in jail has its compensations. I believed I had my brief for the new industrial relations well in hand when I presented it to my father, but since I have been here, with so much time to think, the idea has grown beyond anything I could have imagined."

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"That is just what happened to you at Toul, wasn't it?" Lola reminded him. "Then your vision gave you the first suggestion that you were something in the scheme of things; now you have discovered how to make the application to something very real."

"What a blessing it would be if every citizen was obliged by law to spend a month each year in solitary confinement," Richard cried enthusiastically, "with no one to talk to, no books, no newspapers, just alone with himself, and forced to think! No man ought to be allowed to write, or make a speech, or advance an opinion until he has solved the problem in his own mind by the pitiless self-analysis which comes from an experience such as I am having here. Oh, Lola, it does separate the essentials from the non-essentials, it does show up the specious emptiness of theories, and it does make the real things stand out in wonderful relief from the very blackness of the background!"

From this starting-point, he outlined to her his new conception of the work as he now saw it opening up before him. He pointed out the basic mistakes made in the past and now being made by employers, and with equal clearness laid bare the basic error of labor unionism in placing such stress on organization, rather than on the essentials of service and the welfare of the working-man. With infinite detail he showed Lola the enlarged and revised plan as he had worked it out, to eliminate the errors and to bring the two elements together on a basis which should obviously be for the benefit of both. She was thrilled by the tremendous possibilities

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which his plan seemed to contain. It was all so plausible, so simple, that it would be ridiculous to think that it could fail of acceptance when Richard explained it to the world as he had to her. What a change these few months had wrought. Then, Richard was convinced that his idealism was chimerical; now he saw so clearly before him the opportunity to make it practical that even a charge of patricide appeared to him nothing more serious than a temporary delay! Then, his main thought was to marry her; now he looked upon marriage as a handicap until he had translated his theories into practical realities. At least Lola could take credit to herself for having held him true to his course when he showed signs of weakening . . . but the same might be said of Richard. At one point she would have yielded had he still insisted. Fortunately that moment came after he had gained his new viewpoint, and he failed to recognize her weakness. He had strengthened her as she had guided him, and now the old contentment returned. Again they were workers as they had been in France, . . not as man or woman, but as agents of a force greater than they; not to win the war, but now, thank God, to make possible a lasting peace!

II

Mrs. Stewart noted the change in Lola's bearing, and it relieved an over-powering anxiety. Since the tragedy, Lola had suffered, but instead of bearing her burdens alone, as had been her habit since her homecoming from France, she now turned to her mother with

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became too great for him to bear alone. He removed the disturbing documents from his safe-deposit box, placed them in his inside pocket, and made a special trip to the metropolis to lay them before a hand-writing expert.

III

It happened to be Olga who brought to Richard the news of his disinheritance. Among whom, in a manufacturing town, does news or rumors of news travel more rapidly than the working class? At last the girl succeeded in passing Dr. Thurber's guard, for Richard had asked for her, and the doctor could offer no good reason for denying his request. Olga rejoiced in the tidings she had to bring. If there had not been justification before, this unfatherly act supplied it. To her it was conclusive evidence that James Norton had no right to live.

"You mustn't talk like that," Richard restrained her, as she poured out the story after her first passionate tears of greeting. "He was my father, Olga, and whatever our differences, I shall always respect his memory. It was his money, and he knew that I shouldn't use it as he would have wished it to be used. He had a perfect right to leave it to whomever he chose."

Olga looked at Richard in astonishment.

"If you feel that way toward your father, why did you shoot him?" she demanded.

"You don't think I shot him, Olga?"

"Of course. Why shouldn't you? He called us car-
rion, and he gave your money away."

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"Hush." Richard understood this fiery spirit, and realized what lay beneath her primitive attitude. "I'm sorry you could think that of me, Olga, but you don't realize what you are saying."

The girl was undeniably disappointed, and she showed it.

"Then who did do it?" she asked incredulously.

"That we must find out . . . Olga, do you suppose Tony Lemholtz could have got hold of my revolver?"

"If it was where he could reach it, he could. But if you think he shot the boss, forget it. He would not take the chance."

"He might have, in the excitement," Richard insisted. "I saw his face when he got up from the floor."

"He might have killed you . . . from behind," the girl said contemptuously; "but never the boss in the open. He is too yellow."

"We mustn't take anything for granted, Olga. He was the only one there insane enough to commit such a deed . . . But I can't understand where my gun came from. You might be able to find that out for me, Olga. Will you try?"

"Sure I will try," she said promptly; "but if you did not do it, why have they got you here?"

"They think I did it."

"Your word is as good as theirs . . . and better. Where is the cop? I will tell him so."

"Quiet . . . quiet!" Richard calmed her. "You can help me more by doing what I ask."

"Has the Stewart lady been to see you?" she inquired abruptly.

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the former intimacy which Mrs. Stewart had feared was lost forever. Together they discussed every angle of Richard's precarious position, and from the older woman's unswerving faith in the justice meted out by an all-watchful Providence, the girl gained a comforting peace which comes only from faith.

III

William Stewart the dreamer was a figure of the past. He would have told you that it was Richard who first demonstrated to him the responsibility which rests on those who have acquired knowledge to place it at the disposition of the world. He had been a miser all these years. From his travels, from his books, from his intimate study of current topics, his retentive mind had amassed jewels of thought, . . . the most precious treasures of all, yet he had hoarded them. Like other misers, he had loved to play with his wealth, to count it over, to revel in its possession. When Richard outlined to him his desire to capitalize the idealism which the war had disclosed by applying it to a readjustment of industrial relations, the idea fitted perfectly into the theory of life which his knowledge told him was correct, yet which he himself until then had never crystallized.

At first, Stewart had listened to Richard because it pleased Lola to have him do so; later he assimilated the boy's enthusiasm. With the interest aroused, he had tested Richard's plan theoretically, and with some slight exceptions found it in tune with his own judgment. The young people had asked his assistance in

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putting the plan into practical operation. Again he had acquiesced because it would please them, but with this acquiescence came a sudden realization of his personal responsibility. He must do it not for Lola or for Richard, but for himself, if he was to retain his own self-respect; and having done this, he must keep on translating his ideas into action. The golden knowledge he had accumulated must pass into circulation, and now he must learn how to give it out again made richer by the personal application.

Lola saw this change in her father with mingled feelings of surprise and happiness. Therein lay the difference between the girl and her mother. To these two women, William Stewart was perfection. The elder, accustomed to his passive acceptance of her little tyrannies, regarded him with amazement when now he ventured mildly to insist on something when previously he would have yielded without discussion. Not that it made any material difference, for even the new personality he disclosed was courtly and considerate.

To Lola, however, it was like having a beautiful statue suddenly come to life. The sweet, courteous disposition lost nothing and gained much by the added virility. Life assumed for her a new interest as her father became a real part of affairs which went on about him. At the present time, aside from his new business responsibilities, Stewart's demand for action took the form of working unceasingly in Richard's interests in trying to unravel the mystery of the murder; but thus far these efforts had produced nothing tangible.

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IV

Lola was given a fresh impetus by her visits with Richard at the jail. It was not enough to continue her strenuous programme, . . she must exceed it. Since her return, she had carried on her work with the ex-service men single-handed; now she impressed every one into the work. Barry was placed in charge of her motor corps, organized among friends who owned automobiles, pledging their machines for a specified number of hours each week for the use of disabled soldiers at the hospitals. The fact that chauffeurs replaced the girl owners was perhaps indicative of the change in the attitude of the public since the time when the trim uniforms and the slight, youthful figures at the wheels sped through the streets on their errands of mercy. Plans were soon under way for collecting books and magazines, for an employment agency, for entertainments, . . in all of which Mr. and Mrs. Stewart and their friends were given ample opportunity to co-operate. Organization now seemed to be Lola's shibboleth, and she herself set an example of energy and industry which shamed others into efforts far beyond their natural inclinations.

"There will be nothing left of you or of any of the rest of us if you keep this up much longer," Mrs. Stewart declared between breaths, exhausted as much by the unwonted activity in the atmosphere as by her personal endeavor.

"This is what I have wanted to do ever since I came home," Lola explained. "I used to be afraid that you

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and daddy were just like the other people . . . I don't mean that, dear; but I did think you felt that I ought to forget and settle back into the old conventional routine. That would be actually criminal, when so much remains to be done. But now it is your work as well as mine. You have seen with your own eyes how necessary it is, and I don't have to keep my feelings all pent up inside. I can't tell you what a difference it makes."

"Yes, dear," her mother answered seriously; "we have learned the necessity better from being a part of the work itself. That is human nature. And the people who are working with us are coming to appreciate the situation better, just as your father and I do. But what delights me most is to see my child her old self again. I suspect that you and Richard have come to a better understanding about something too . . . at any rate I am hoping so."

"Yes, mother; we have," she acknowledged.

"I am relieved," Mrs. Stewart said frankly. "I was greatly concerned over what you told me . . . You must be married immediately after his acquittal."

"Would the verdict really make any difference?" Lola inquired in a low tone. "If we are convinced of his innocence, and things go against him, he would need me more than ever."

"Fortunately we don't have to settle that point yet," Mrs. Stewart replied evasively. "The main thing is that you have come to a realization that the war didn't change the natural order of things after all. If you and Richard had been married as you ought to

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As he nodded, the girl's eyes snapped jealously.

"Are you going to let her come between us?"

Richard looked at her in surprise. It was the first time Olga had ever suggested a claim upon him, and his immediate reaction was one of annoyance. Then the absurdity of her words became uppermost, and he smiled into her face.

"No, you silly child, . . the Stewart lady is not going to take your little playmate away from you . . . Why are you so serious today?"

Olga's eyes were snapping, and her whole bearing showed the resentment she felt that he took her words so lightly.

"Because I am serious," she answered him. "I am not a child, and you shall never call me that again. I am a woman, just as the Stewart lady is, and you have no right to treat me like this."

Richard had seen her in temper before, and he sensed nothing in this outburst beyond others which had preceded it. Sometimes he purposely teased her, to see the color come to her cheeks and the fire to her eyes.

"Come here, you little spit-fire," he said, placing his arm around her and drawing her slight form to him. "What do you mean by getting angry with me when I am having so much trouble any way?"

"It is your own fault for not answering my question. I do not like to have you make sport of me . . . I think too much of you for that."

"I only make sport of you when you invite it," he said more seriously. "There has been no change in our friendship since that afternoon at East Lake, except

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that it is stronger. What has Miss Lola to do with it?"

"Everything," the girl answered solemnly. "It is true we sipped the wine as friends long ago, but much has happened since."

"True, but nothing to affect our friendship."

"Then you lived in a different world from mine, now you live in my world; then you were a rich man's son, now you are poor like me; then you were Mr. Richard Norton, now you are my Richard; then we were friends only, now . . ."

"Nonsense!" he interrupted her. "There is no stronger word than friend. Miss Lola is also my friend, yet she would never ask if you were going to come between her and me."

"Her friendship is different . . . she expects you to marry her."

"She expects that no longer, Olga," Richard explained. "I never expect to marry now. I have told her so, and she understands."

"She understands that you no longer love her? . . . Your engagement is broken!" Olga's voice expressed absolute incredulity.

"I didn't say that. I do love Miss Lola . . . You have always known that . . . but now I am face to face with something more important than marriage or love. When I get out of here, I mean to devote my life to putting across what you have heard me talk of for the men. It means sacrifice to me, but I must not think of wife, or home, or children until I have fulfilled the duty I have laid upon myself."

It was difficult for Olga to comprehend Richard's

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devote ourselves to making other people happier and better than to seek it for our own selfish enjoyment?"

"It may be," Mrs. Stewart answered doubtfully and without enthusiasm. "I have always admired the Christian martyrs, but it's another matter when it strikes one's own family . . . Of course, you and Dick must work it out for yourselves."

V

This conversation with her mother unnerved Lola. It was one thing to argue with herself and another to crystallize an idea into words which should satisfy one who approached it from an unsympathetic angle. While with Richard, everything seemed to fit perfectly into their new scheme of life; when away from him an unexplained something crowded itself between her zeal and her instinct, preventing their complete co-ordination. Sometimes the conflict seemed too great for her to bear, but then she gained new strength by repeating to herself that she was fighting the good fight, . . . that, even though her course was still unfinished, thus far she had kept the faith.

CHAPTER XXV

I

NO ONE realized more clearly than William Treadway that the wealth and position to which he had so suddenly fallen heir carried a responsibility from him to the community to live up to what their possession represented. Immediately after the probating of James Norton's will, he made it known to such charitable organizations as were not included as beneficiaries, but which had previously been the recipients of his chief's bounty, that similar support might be expected from him. The Civic Association, the Congregational Church, the Norcross hospital, and many other similar institutions, were gratified to find that James Norton's money had fallen into such sympathetic hands. The passing of the Great Man of Norcross was lamented, but the town soon accepted the fact that his mantle would fall upon the shoulders of his secretary, and it was the general verdict that his successor was wearing it with becoming grace.

Treadway also realized that a great man does more than simply give from his stores, and he straightway enlisted his personal effort in all the good works that concerned the town, of which he was now so prominent

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a part. Lola's activity at just this time afforded him ample opportunity to be of service to her, and she found in him an efficient and helpful worker in several of her newly-formed organizations. He knew that she cherished against him the fact that he had not seen active service in the war. Several of her quips, which he had passed off lightly at the time, still left their scars. Here was his opportunity to heap coals of fire upon her head, and incidentally an excuse to be with her more frequently than she would have permitted under other circumstances.

"Some day you will realize how great an injustice you did me concerning my war-work," he said quietly once in Lola's "office," when she complimented him on some work he had just successfully completed. "You said that those who stayed at home cannot understand the feelings of the boys who got into it; I'll say that those who got into it can't understand the feelings of those who had to stay at home."

"I suppose that's true, Billy," Lola admitted, willing at least to give him the benefit of the doubt. "I don't mean to be unjust, but I'm afraid I can never understand how any man able to see service could permit anything to stop him."

"Sometimes it's harder to do the things we have to do than those which people think we ought to do," Treadway remarked seriously. "If I wore a stripe for every wound the world has given me for sticking to what was shown me to be my duty . . . against my will, I'd be a hero."

"But you wouldn't be hobbling along on one leg

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like Barry, or sleeping over in France, or up in the cemetery, like Jack Munsey, still waiting for your War Risk payments to come through . . . Let's not talk about that, Billy. You said to me once, 'All that hurrah boys stuff has gone into the discard now.' With a lot of people I think it has. I'm one of those who still feel a thrill when the 'Star Spangled Banner' is played, and still believe that there is something worth while going to come out of those awful years which hasn't come out yet, so I simply can't understand the attitude these people take. I'm not knocking you in particular, Billy. I've no doubt that you and all these other people have acted conscientiously, and that is all you have to consider. I have my own conscience, and that keeps me busy enough trying to live up to its demands. Truly, I don't mean to be disagreeable; but you started the conversation, and I have to say what I really think."

"If you feel that way about me, Lola, perhaps I'd better not continue this work I'm doing for you," Treadway said abruptly, resentful of her continued criticism.

"Work for me, Billy?" she inquired. "I thought you were doing it to make the boys who protected those who were kept at home in essential industries realize that their sacrifices were appreciated. You don't mean to say that you have been doing this for me?"

Treadway looked at her steadily for a moment. No one ever spoke to him as Lola did, no one ever made him feel so thoroughly uncomfortable. Everything else he had craved and planned for had come to him

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except Lola Stewart. She sat there in her desk-chair with apparently no idea that she was disciplining him, yet in every word he felt a sting. Lola could not realize how cruel she really was. If she felt as strongly as her words seemed to indicate, she would not treat him with such consideration, or accept his co-operation. Treadway had trained himself to take the bitter with the sweet whenever the sweet was eventually assured. With his confidence in himself, he could not doubt the ultimate result of his determination to overcome opposition in this instance as in all the others. Success had come to be a habit with him, and temporary rebuffs were only incidents in the day's run. At the same time, Treadway was sufficiently astute to appreciate the fact that at present he was on the wrong track, so with his usual agility he shunted onto a safer route.

"Of course I'm doing it for the boys," he protested vigorously. "At the same time I don't see anything unpatriotic in saying that it is a particular pleasure to me to be working with you. You know how I feel toward you, Lola. I've worked like a slave all my life to get where I am today. I've taken chances that another man wouldn't have had the nerve to take, and I've won out. Now I've got everything in the world I want except you . . . No. I'm not going to propose to you again," he added quickly, as she started to protest. "I know how anxious you are about Dick, and I respect it. He has first claim, of course. All I ask is that you let me stand next. Dick is in a serious situation. If the expected happens, it will be a terrible blow to you. In that case I want to be permitted to be near you, to

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comfort you, and to help you face the world again after the suffering you will have to endure."

"You can't really think he will be convicted!" Lola cried, forgetful of all else that Treadway had said. "If you could see him and talk with him as I have, you would know that Richard Norton never shot his father."

"There, there," Treadway sought to calm her. "I didn't mean to bring back the spectre; but perhaps it is just as well for you to begin to prepare yourself. I have gone over matters with every one connected with the unfortunate affair, and there seems to be no evidence to connect any one else with the murder. It is most distressing to be obliged to give my testimony: I, the beneficiary of Mr. Norton's generosity, against his son, who has been cut off in my favor. And yet . . . does not Mr. Norton's action make even clearer the relations which existed between the two? I hope Dick's lawyer will put in a defence of temporary insanity. If I were assured that Richard would acknowledge his act, while denying his responsibility, I might be of assistance by giving testimony which would strengthen his case."

Lola smiled sadly.

"You don't understand Dick," she said firmly. "That boy doesn't know what compromise is. If he had shot his father impulsively or in anger he would be the first to admit it, and to insist on receiving the utmost penalty. Not having done it, he has no anxiety about the outcome. His confidence is sublime. Dick is today thinking not of himself but of the great work he has to do after he is acquitted. The experience, awful as

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it is, has brought out in him that wonderful strength and character which he had allowed to lie dormant since his return home."

Treadway shook his head soberly.

"I'm afraid it is all part of the same madness," he insisted; "but it will naturally go to help him. No man in his right mind could fail to realize his danger, and what every one tells me of his indifference confirms me in my apprehensions . . . Lola," he said suddenly, changing the subject abruptly, "if it were not for Richard, wouldn't I stand some chance of winning you?"

The question came so unexpectedly that for a moment the girl was caught off her guard.

"I never intend to marry any one," she said quickly, and promptly regretted having said it.

"Not even Dick?" Treadway demanded.

"Not even Dick," Lola answered.

Treadway was completely mystified.

"But I thought you were confident that he would be acquitted . . ."

"I am. That is why I speak so definitely. If Dick were convicted, I should probably change my mind."

"Of course I have no right to ask, but is your engagement broken?"

"Dick and I have decided that we can do what we have to do better if we are absolutely free."

"I told you he was out of his head!" Treadway declared. "If that doesn't prove it I don't know what does. So Richard has . . ."

"He has done nothing of the sort," Lola interrupted him indignantly, thoroughly incensed by the turn the

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conversation had taken. "You had no right to question me, and I ought not to have answered you."

Treadway was distinctly interested. Lola's protest was so violent that he was convinced that unexpectedly he had hit upon the truth. Nothing but mortification would cause that sudden rush of color to her cheeks and bring the tears to her eyes.

"But you did answer," he said deliberately, "and you are giving me further information now. All this is surprising and encouraging. Of course he did it for your sake. Very manly of him, I'll say. And now where do I come in?"

"You don't come in," Lola cried, exasperated, rising to her feet. "On the contrary, this is where you go out! It is cowardly of you to take advantage of me, and I don't intend to give you another chance."

"Your loyalty to Dick under the circumstances is splendid," Treadway bowed graciously.

"My loyalty is based on faith. The real murderer is sure to be found. There were others who had the chance."

"Who, for instance?" he demanded.

"You, for one," she declared, making a random shot in her anger.

Treadway's face went white.

"You don't really believe . . ."

"I am simply answering your question," Lola replied, holding her head high as she marched past him. "I'll leave you to close the office."

CHAPTER XXVI

I

IF IT appears that Barry O'Carolan has been neglected in these recent chronicles, it must not be assumed that he has ceased to be a part of life at Norcross. When one glances at his watch, he is conscious only of its hands and face, yet the myriads of smaller pieces which together constitute its mechanism are performing their more humble functions with faithful accuracy and regularity.

All Barry's actual knowledge of the tragedy came from the many and conflicting stories which passed from mouth to mouth. Like Richard's other friends, he was unable to explain his loyalty in the face of the facts as known; but nothing could swerve him from his conviction of "the Capt'n's" innocence.

"I know from his face that he would always fight fair. He never did it," was Barry's invariable statement at the close of every argument.

The coming of the frost in the garden lessened Barry's duties so that even with Lola's motor corps added to his responsibilities he found himself with more time on his hands than he liked. Mrs. Stewart still kept him supplied with books, but somehow Barry could

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not concentrate upon them. He was impelled to action. He felt himself in the midst of a real drama, being enacted all around him, and for the time fictitious characters lost their power to interest. Richard was ever uppermost in his mind, and Barry found opportunity to discuss the case in some phase with nearly all the eye-witnesses.

Richard was not the only one in Norcross who suggested Tony Lemholtz's name in connection with the murder, and it was in Tony's direction that Barry mentally pointed the finger of suspicion. In fact, Lemholtz was made so uncomfortable by the unspoken charges that he would have left town except for the fact that he was held as a witness by the Grand Jury. As the State had not taken action against him, no one had the temerity to translate his suspicions into charges, but many of Tony's closest cronies dropped their former intimacy and awaited developments.

II

One afternoon, for lack of something better to do, Barry hobbled over to the Norton place, where he knew things had gone at sixes and sevens since the death of its master and the less personal attention of the administrators. Old Hannah was in charge, and she, Barry was well aware, would never listen to any word against "Mr. Richard." It was an opportunity to commune with a kindred spirit, and Barry craved reassurance after an argument with one of the townspeople who had personally tried, convicted, and executed the prisoner.

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Hannah welcomed Barry with genuine delight, for she, poor soul, had little opportunity to keep in touch with the progress of affairs. "Mr. Richard" was still her "boy," and he was in trouble. Many a heartburn had she experienced in the great house on the Hill when the master made Richard suffer from his tyranny. She had been powerless to intervene then, as she was powerless now. She kept him supplied in jail with luscious mince and pumpkin pies, which had made his mouth water ever since he was a small boy. While she baked them she recalled the time when she discovered the youthful Richard with half a pie in each hand, and chuckled to herself as she remembered how he averted her threatened scolding by saying archly, "If you don't want me to steal 'em, Hannah, you mustn't make 'em so good!"

This service to the boy was slight, but like the Juggler of Notre Dame, it was the best she had to give . . . and it satisfied her craving; but her heart yearned for news and for comforting assurances which could come only from one who agreed with her that Richard could do no wrong.

Hannah did not question the fact that Richard had fired the shot, but she considered the provocation given by the old man ample justification for the act.

"If you'd seen and heard what I have, Barry O'Carolan, you'd wonder that Mr. Richard hadn't done it before," she declared. "My poor boy . . . how that old man abused him!"

"The Capt'n never did it," Barry declared stoutly. "He might have got mad and punched his father in

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the face, or cursed him out, or somethin' like that, but he'd never shoot any one without givin' him a chance. The Capt'n isn't that kind of a feller."

"But he admitted it was his revolver," Hannah exclaimed, surprised that there was any doubt as to the responsibility. "I was always scared of that revolver, every time I dusted the mantel-piece in the library. I used to look at it and think of the hundreds of Germans Mr. Richard must have shot with it, and it made me squirm."

"You needn't have been scared," Barry tried to reassure her. "It prob'ly wasn't loaded."

"Oh, yes; it was. I spoke of it once when Mr. Treadway was cleaning it. He had it open, and I saw the part with the bullets in it. I used to wish Mr. Richard had taken it with him when he left home. It kept reminding me of him."

Barry sprang from his chair so suddenly that he nearly lost his balance.

"Didn't the Capt'n take that gun with him?"

"Oh, no; it lay here on the mantel-piece for two or three weeks after he went away. I wisht he had."

"What became of it then?" Barry demanded excitedly.

"I never knew. P'raps Mr. Treadway sent it over to Mr. Richard. P'raps that's why he was cleaning it up."

"You stay right here, and don't you say anythin' to anybody 'til I get back," Barry cried, leaving Hannah aghast, in the belief that he had suddenly lost his reason.

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III

Barry's wooden leg never made such rapid progress as when it covered the distance between the Norton place and Mr. Stewart's house. He was not sure just what this information he had gleaned might be worth, but his instinct told him it was valuable.

The Stewarts were in the library, discussing the ever-present subject when Barry arrived. With them was the most famous criminal lawyer the metropolis could supply. Mr. Stewart was determined that Richard should have the advantage of the highest legal defence, and the name of the counsel retained guaranteed full protection of his rights. The lawyer had held conferences with the prisoner, and gone over the ground thoroughly with several of those who had witnessed the tragedy.

"Young Norton is of little use to us in the defence," the lawyer declared. "He does not sense the gravity of his position. It is all very well to have this supreme confidence, but his simple reiteration of his innocence won't go far with a jury."

"You have gained nothing from the others which could be made of value?" Stewart asked anxiously.

"Absolutely nothing. His best friends are doing what they can to convict him by emphasizing the provocation."

"I left word we were not to be disturbed," Mrs. Stewart explained quietly to the maid who appeared at the door.

"It's Barry, madam, who insists on seeing Miss

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Lola. I told him you were engaged, but he is most persistent."

"Tell him I'll see him in the morning," Lola instructed her.

"Lemholtz seems to be the only one who would have been likely to shoot Norton," Mr. Stewart resumed as the maid retired.

"Yes," the lawyer admitted; "I've gone into that. He had threatened Norton . . ."

"Didn't Mrs. Stewart make herself clear?" Mr. Stewart said sternly to the maid, who reappeared at the door.

"Yes, sir; I'm sorry, but Barry says he must see Miss Lola at once. It's about Mr. Richard . . ."

"Perhaps he has discovered something," Lola exclaimed. "Please let him come in . . . He's my relic of the war," she explained to the lawyer.

Barry was abashed to find a stranger present. He had not hesitated to force himself upon the Stewarts, for he knew that they would understand; but with a stranger present he was much confused.

"It's all right, Barry," Lola checked his broken apologies. "This is the lawyer who is going to help Mr. Richard, so if you have anything to tell us about him, now is just the time."

"It's about the Capt'n's gun," he said abruptly.

Barry instantly found himself surrounded by intensely interested listeners.

"What about the gun?" the lawyer demanded, as Barry hesitated.

"It was lyin' on the mantel-piece in the Norton house

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for two or three weeks after the Capt'n left home."

"How do you know that?" was the lawyer's crisp inquiry.

"Hannah, the woman over at Norton's, just told me."

"Who took it away? . . I must see this woman at once."

"She don't know, sir, but she saw Mr. Treadway handlin' it. She thinks he might have sent it to Mr. Richard, but . . ."

"Treadway?" the lawyer repeated slowly, turning to the Stewarts. "He is the chief witness against the prisoner, and the man who urges us to put in a plea of insanity . . . And, by George! he is the beneficiary in Norton's will, isn't he? Curious we hadn't thought of him. Why couldn't we have used the gun? This woman at Norton's has given us the clew."

"Billy Treadway is hateful and impertinent," Lola exclaimed, still nursing her resentment, "but one could never think of him as the murderer."

She spoke with such feeling that the lawyer looked at her surprised. The flush in her cheeks told his trained eyes something he did not know before.

"There's a motive, any way, . . . perhaps more than one," the lawyer insisted, . . "and the opportunity."

"I agree with Lola," Mr. Stewart added. "I've known Treadway a long time. I've seen him every day since this happened. Why, the codicil is dated only a fortnight before Norton's death. Treadway would never have taken a chance like that when the property was sure to come to him anyway."

"He might not have known of the existence of the

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codicil," the lawyer contended, still thinking aloud . . . "At all events this evidence confirms young Norton's claim that the revolver was not in his possession, which is a big point."

"Is what I told you any good?" Barry asked anxiously, uncomfortable in the presence of the great lawyer, and eager to get away.

"Yes, Barry . . ." Lola assured him; "it may prove most important."

"Don't talk about this outside," the lawyer cautioned as Barry departed. Then he resumed his conversation with Mr. Stewart.

"We can't afford to overlook any one in a case like this," he said, referring to Treadway. "You think it absurd to consider young Norton as the slayer of his father, yet he is held by the Grand Jury as the probable murderer, and we don't feel any too sure that we can prove his innocence at the trial. Lemholtz was vindictive, but he had no special motive; this man Treadway had a motive, a powerful one, and apparently an opportunity to get hold of young Norton's gun. Why is he so concerned to have the insanity plea put in? One of these three men obviously shot Norton. It may be ridiculous, but what this man has just told us is the first tangible thing I've found to work on . . I suggest that we go over to the Norton place now."

"Have you talked with Henry Cross?" Stewart inquired.

"Cross? No; where does he come in?"

"He asked me at the bank yesterday who Richard's

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lawyer was, and I gave him your name. I don't know what he had in mind."

"Suppose we find out," the lawyer suggested, looking at his watch. "If it has any bearing on this case, perhaps he would come over."

IV

A telephone call discovered Henry Cross at home, and eager to see the lawyer. Within fifteen minutes he had joined the group in the Stewart library. The old man's face was ashen, his cheeks so drawn that the lines age had written there were accentuated. As Stewart introduced Cross to the lawyer he was struck by his physical condition, and commented on it sympathetically.

"I'll be all right when I get this off my mind," Cross replied gravely. "This is James Norton's persecution of me in death for the trouble I gave him during his lifetime. That man may be dead . . ." he shook his finger impressively . . . "he may be dead, but I tell you he has more power over me today than any living man I know."

The lawyer glanced at Stewart inquiringly, but before he could speak Cross continued.

"I have always hated him," he declared; "and for twenty years I laid traps to catch him, but every time he was smarter than I was and he licked me. Then I bought commercial paper of his Company, with the idea of making trouble for him when the inflation bubble burst. I thought I had him at last, but I was swindled by that slick secretary of his into renewing

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some notes. Norton told me they were forged. He got all excited, as he used to, and left me at the bank with a promise that he would turn Treadway over to the law. Then he was shot. Treadway came right down to see me, and for a time he made me believe that Norton was the crook. But he wasn't, and that is where Norton scored on me again. I wanted to think so, but I suspected that smart Aleck, and my conscience troubled me until I showed these notes to an expert. He says every one of them is forged . . . just as Norton told me."

"By Treadway?"

Stewart and the lawyer asked the question simultaneously.

"By Treadway," Cross declared solemnly. "Now James Norton is grinning in his grave at my losing all that money trying to spite him, and coming here with the evidence that will save his son."

"Have you such evidence?" the lawyer demanded sternly. "The fact that the notes were forged does not prove that Treadway was the forger."

Again the old man shook his finger impressively.

"James Norton was shot by William Treadway to prevent the knowledge of these forgeries from becoming known. How he got hold of Richard's gun I don't know, but the strikers' raid on the office gave him his chance to kill his man and throw the blame on some one else. Norton left me an hour before the murder with a promise to turn Treadway over to the authorities. Treadway admitted to me that they had discussed the matter. Since then he has offered to buy

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the notes from me . . . for what else than to destroy the evidence? If you need any more than that to convict Treadway of the murder, you're not the lawyer I take you to be . . . But it is James Norton who made me come to you. Now I hope he'll leave me in peace."

The hush that fell on the little group in the Stewart library evidenced the dramatic value of the old man's words. He was so shaken it was necessary to assist him into his carriage, and Stewart sent his butler to see him safely home. When he returned to the library Stewart was the first to speak.

"I cannot believe it possible . . . Treadway a forger and a murderer . . ."

"Twice a murderer," Lola cried hotly, . . . "placing the responsibility of his crime upon the shoulders of an innocent man!"

"This has been an eventful afternoon," the lawyer remarked with obvious satisfaction. "With the information we now have it ought to be fairly simple to reconstruct the case. Treadway is now held by the Grand Jury as witness. Perhaps before the trial is over we may arrange for the witness and the prisoner to exchange places! . . . Come, let us follow the scent over at Norton's."

CHAPTER XXVII

I

THOSE residents of Norcross who selected the town as an abiding-place because of the quiet calm of country life found themselves obliged to reconstruct their hypothesis. The strike proved the first disturbing influence; later, the murder of James Norton and the arrest of his son forced the temperature to fever-heat, and centered the thoughts of every one upon the trial. Then came the unexpected climax, which left even those citizens with a reputation for intelligence and self-control gaping at each other, wondering where the drama was going to end.

The court-house, during the hectic days of the Norton trial, proved hopelessly inadequate to accomodate the surging mass of would-be spectators who clamored for admission. Every resident of Norcross considered himself personally interested, and those excluded by lack of space looked upon the fact as personal discrimination. To most of them, the trial was a holiday spectacle rather than an exhibition of Justice exercising her function, . . . a display of blood-lust handed down perhaps from their Puritan ancestors who abolished the sport of bear-baiting not because it gave pain to

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the bear but because of the pleasure derived by the spectators. Richard Norton, already a picturesque character in the town life from the importance of his family, his war-service, and his leadership of the Norton workmen, loomed large as a drawing-card.

Except among his immediate friends, the fact of Richard's guilt was generally accepted, so the interest in the case centered in the nature of the defence and the verdict. Treadway was the chief witness for the State, and after his testimony it seemed merely a perfunctory action for Richard's lawyer to attempt any cross-examination. The spectators were amazed, when Treadway was turned over to him, to have the lawyer force, by a series of cumulative questions, a flat declaration that Treadway saw the shot fired; for this final statement seemed absolutely fatal to young Norton. If it was hoped that by proving him a perjurer his testimony against Richard would be invalidated, the purpose failed, for a majority of those in the courtroom looked upon Treadway's reluctance to disclose his full knowledge of the facts as an act of sublime loyalty to his friend rather than an effort to subvert the action of the law.

With the closing of the case for the State the great lawyer brought into action those characteristics which had given him his reputation. First he placed old Hannah on the stand and established the fact that the revolver had been in the Norton house after Richard left home, and that Treadway had handled it. Through Henry Cross he brought the forged notes into the case, and the discovery of Treadway's criminality by James

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Norton. Alec Sterling testified that both the prisoner's hands were extended in supplication at the moment the shot was fired, and Tony Lemholtz swore reluctantly that although standing as close to him as Treadway did, he saw nothing of the gun until the officer lifted the weapon from the floor and showed it to the prisoner. Finally, the handwriting expert was placed on the stand to pronounce the signatures to the notes obvious forgeries.

"I am offering no defence for the prisoner," the lawyer summed up, "as innocence needs no defence. The law seeks to protect the community by employing its strength to detect and punish the wrong-doer, but in the exercise of its powerful function it wraps its majesty with special care about those falsely accused to prevent the miscarriage of its justice. By taking advantage of a strategic moment, staged as if in his single interest, this man here" . . . the lawyer pointed his finger dramatically at Treadway . . . "this man here was enabled, by an act so quickly conceived and skilfully executed as to do credit to his cleverness, to remove his accuser and place the responsibility upon the head of an innocent man. Not content with the assassination of his friend and benefactor, he nonchalantly assumes possession of the vast property which he knows to belong rightfully to his benefactor's son, since which time, while waiting for the law, misled by perjured testimony, to aid him unwittingly in his nefarious scheme, he has taken his place among his fellow-citizens as an honored member of the community, enjoying their confidence, contributing to their charities,

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sympathizing with the unfortunate prisoner, and even having the audacity to suggest the line of his defence . . . Why were you so insistent that a plea of temporary insanity be entered?" the lawyer demanded, pointing suddenly at Treadway . . . "Why, except through fear that sooner or later your own guilt would be detected! . . . Gentlemen of the jury, in all the long experience I have had in the practice of my profession, in all the history of Massachusetts criminal cases I do not recall the equal of this for sheer effrontery or daring, and its conception places this man among the most dangerous criminals with whom the State has to deal . . . In view of the facts as disclosed and established, in the name of Justice itself I ask a verdict of 'Not Guilty' for the prisoner."

To this day those who were present in the courtroom at that moment like nothing better than to recount the scene to those less fortunate. The prompt verdict of acquittal by the jury; the shouts as Richard was released; the ugly threats against Treadway as he was taken into custody; the nonchalance of his bearing and his single comment, "I have played it badly." They would tell you of the dramatic moment when a working-girl from the plant pushed her way through the crowd to the place where Richard was standing, threw her arms about his neck and kissed him brazenly upon the lips. They would tell you much more in detail of what happened, and perhaps some things which had been unintentionally added to make a good story better; but these form an aftermath in the case of Common-

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wealth v. Richard Norton, and as such require no record here.

II

Lola was making her way through the crowd in the court-room to greet Richard when she saw Olga express her joy over the outcome. A twinge of pain passed through her heart, and she instinctively turned back. Then she rebuked herself, and resumed her struggle to crowd past the surging groups. How ridiculous to feel hurt! It was Olga who did it, not Richard, and her action was the uncontrolled expression of a wild spirit. If Dick had checked her, it would have shown scant gratitude for the girl's devoted care during his illness. Lola's strength rested on the philosophy taught her by her war experiences, and her announced creed that essentials were all that counted; her weakness asked if Olga's kiss was really a non-essential. The answer depended upon what preceded it and what followed. Did Olga understand that Richard had no thought of marrying her? These and a hundred other questions pursued one another through her mind during that moment of hesitation, proving perhaps that philosophy is sometimes illusive when one tries to rest upon it his own human problems.

At last she stood before Richard, and he eagerly seized the hand she extended to him.

"My confidence was not so foolish as some of them thought!" he cried. "It all seems a terrible dream. To think that Treadway . . . the man he trusted most

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. . . should have killed him! Poor old dad! There must be some way I can make it up to him."

"You'll come home with us, Dick?" she asked.

"Stay at our house until you have time to readjust yourself," added Mrs. Stewart, who had just joined them.

"We can't take 'no' for an answer, Dick," Lola's father insisted. "When you are equal to it, you and I have some important problems to discuss about the business. Make our home yours for the present."

"I'd like nothing better," Richard declared, "if you'll let me come to you later in the day . . . There is something I must do first."

The Stewarts respected his desire and left him.

III

As soon as he could separate himself from his friends and the curious-minded, Richard set out for the village cemetery. The freedom after the weeks of confinement almost intoxicated him, and he drew in great breaths of the clear, cold air as he strode along. The road which led off the main street to the little settlement of the dead was seldom traveled except by the silent processions which wound their way up the hill to perform the last ceremony over the mortal remains of departed Norcrossians, and Richard met no one to divert his mind from its purpose. He had not been there since his mother's funeral ten years before. Now he wondered that during all this time he had not visited her grave, there to find the comfort which had been denied him at home.

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The freshly-made mound beside his mother's showed Richard where the body of his father had been laid at rest. An imposing pillar had just been placed in position. Treadway had seen to that. As Richard stood beside the grave he felt a momentary reaction, and leaned against the stone for support. Then, realizing that this was Treadway's gift, he stood upright and moved a step away. But these were trivial incidents. Here he was, close to the mortal relics of that powerful personality which had dominated his life. The flashing eyes were dulled, the imperious voice stilled, yet Richard felt his father very near him. Could it be that with the supreme understanding which comes in the beyond, the old man was now in closer sympathy with his son? Richard asked himself why this should not be. With human prejudices removed, with the power to see things with an all-penetrating eye, it would depend wholly upon whether the plan upon which Richard was resolved was right. If so, his father must understand it now, and, understanding, must wish him to accomplish what he had undertaken.

"If you believe in me now," he said aloud, "give me of your strength . . . Let it be our work, not mine alone . . . Guide me and help me to do my part."

Mentally refreshed, Richard retraced his steps. Attracted by another recent grave, he stooped to read the inscription on the simple headstone.

"Jack Munsey!" he exclaimed.

His lips tightened as his mind centered on what that grave represented, and unconsciously he spoke aloud words in which was concentrated a grim determination:

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"This . . . must . . . never . . . happen . . . again."

At the Norton home Hannah threw herself unreservedly into his strong arms, expressing her joy in a paroxysm of tears. Finally freeing himself from her embraces, he passed from one room to another: the chamber in which he had spent so many sleepless nights after painful evenings with his father; the dining-room, where he had eaten so many silent meals, his father buried in his newspaper; the library, which was their joint living-room. He mechanically pulled open one of the drawers of the great mahogany desk, so inseparably associated with his father's work. A legal-looking document lay before him. It was dated in New York City, during a recent absence from home, written and signed in James Norton's familiar hand, and duly attested by witnesses whose names were unfamiliar to Richard. He picked it up and read:

"Convinced by mature judgment that a codicil recently executed while unduly affected by certain circumstances will work injustice to my only son, Richard Norton, who, in spite of our many differences of opinion, is very dear to me, I hereby revoke said codicil, and declare that my will, previously executed and now in the hands of my executors, expresses my final wishes as to the disposition of my property.

"This instrument is executed in case my death should occur, through accident or otherwise, before I can destroy the aforementioned codicil. In this unexpected event I ask my son to believe that while my opposition to his reactionary ideas is sincere, my affection

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for him is such that I place no restrictions upon my bequest."

Richard's heart bounded! His thought was not of the restoration of his property, but that beneath the austere exterior was an overwhelming love. The old man's opposition was not antagonism to his son's ideas so much as an unwillingness or inability to relinquish the principles which forty years of habit had established!

It was a day of experiences. At length he rose, and passed his hand wearily over his forehead, but as he stepped out onto the veranda there was a smile of contentment upon his face.

IV

As he stood there, the last of the Nortons, he did not feel himself to be alone. The reflected radiance of the setting sun rested upon his upturned face, but beyond that was a light which comes only from within.

"Father!" he cried at length. "That understanding which was denied in life has come to us now. You and I are at peace!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

I

OLGA was conscience-stricken when she recalled how public had been the display of her emotion in the court-room, yet she would have burst into a tantrum if any one other than herself had ventured to criticize. As a matter of fact, her ebullition was due to the reaction she had experienced from the sudden and unexpected twist the case took. That a trial should be required at all was beyond her comprehension, for one only had to ask Richard, as she had done, to learn from him of his entire innocence! Starting with this hypothesis, she had thought of the whole affair as a mere formality, but she became more impressed with its seriousness as the day progressed. Treadway became the object of her deadliest hatred when he testified against Richard. Olga knew that he was lying, but to her surprise and consternation the spectators around her accepted his statement as absolute truth! For the first time she realized that the danger earlier suggested by Dr. Thurber's chance reference to the electric chair was real, and apprehension gripped her heart. Then, when the lawyer fastened the crime so completely on Treadway, Olga's joy knew no bounds. She had not believed that such things ever

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happened except in the movies! She wriggled her way to where Richard was standing, and once there it would have required more than human force to prevent her from expressing her emotion in the one way that Nature prompted.

After the first excitement, she realized how her demonstration would appear to others, and she was deeply chagrined. Richard had not chided her, but she feared lest she had made him angry. He had always been so gentle with her, even when he scolded her, but she remembered the look in his face when Sterling told him of the strikers' raid upon the office! As other people crowded around her hero, the girl slipped away unnoticed, and now, thoroughly miserable, awaited Richard's return to the flat where she had nursed him back to life.

The waiting was trying, for the moments were filled with doubts. The dead silence of that room contained ghosts of hours which to her had been the happiest in her life; but now they seemed so long ago that she almost questioned their reality. As she waited, her mind centered on the conversation with Richard in the jail, the effect of which still hung over her oppressively, even though she had been unable to analyze her vague forebodings. Now the sentences came back to her in fragments, and they troubled her. She was not wise enough nor sufficiently experienced to explain her fears, but in her heart she felt the sophistry of Richard's arguments. All that was clear to her was that she had been necessary to him while he was ill and weak, but now he needed her no longer.

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II

The hours of the afternoon crept by, and Richard did not come; but at last Olga's vigil was rewarded by the sound of feet upon the stairs. She started joyfully to the door, but before she reached it drew back in disappointment. That intermittent clump upon the treads was not made by Richard's footsteps, and could only announce the approach of Barry O'Carolan and his wooden leg. Her lip quivered, but the thought that the visitor might perhaps tell her of Richard caused her to open the door and welcome him.

"Hello, Olga," he greeted her on the top landing; "where's the Capt'n?"

"That is what I am asking you."

"Hasn't he been back here?"

Olga shook her head.

"I thought he'd be sure to come here," Barry continued. "I want to tell him what it means to us fellers to have him cleared . . . Can I wait a few minutes to see if he'll come?"

"Sure."

Olga led the way into the room and motioned Barry to a chair by way of belated hospitality.

"Why don't you sit down?" she demanded abruptly after a moment of awkward standing.

"Ladies first!"

Barry bowed with as much ceremony as his wooden leg would permit.

"My God!" Olga exclaimed in frank astonishment. "That Stewart lady must have been teaching you man-

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ners! . . But say, Barry, there is something nice in being polite to people, isn't there?"

Her caller had been grinning sheepishly over the attention his courtesy attracted, but the girl's remark as they seated themselves put him at his ease.

"At first it does look kind of foolish, don't it?" he replied . . . "all this bowin' and scrapin', and takin' off your hat, and treatin' women like they were better than men; but after you get used to it, it sort of makes you feel good to do it."

"You are a swell ladies' man, Barry, for a lame feller. Did you have to practice much?"

"Shucks, no!" he boasted, trying to act with becoming modesty; "it comes natural when you see it goin' on 'round you all the time."

"There is something in that," Olga admitted after a moment's meditation. "It is the same way with me. I can't say 'hell' and 'damn' any more since I have been with Richard without feeling like . . . There! I nearly said it then!"

"You needn't stop on my account," Barry assured her magnanimously. "I'm not above employin' a bit of profanity myself at times, but I've quit wastin' it on unimportant occasions."

"Barry," the girl declared in admiration, "you will be a gentleman yet if you keep on. When I first knew you I didn't think you amounted to anything, with your working around in the garden, and your dippy ideas about flowers, and being so gentle and quiet. I used to think a man to be worth anything had to talk loud, and swing his arms, and all that. But look at Richard!

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There is a man for you! He is quiet to look at, but my God! when he gets moving! Being with him has taught me a lot. And every now and then I hear of some things you have done that I wouldn't have thought you had the guts to do; but it's that quiet 'strength of conviction' Richard talks about, and I suppose you have learned it from the Stewart lady, just as I did from Richard . . ."

"Say," interrupted Barry, "aren't you gettin' kind of fresh callin' the Capt'n by his first name?"

"Who has a better right?" Olga demanded, placed instantly on the defensive.

"Well," he answered, looking at her deliberately, "there's Miss Lola for one, . . . she's got a better right."

"Did she ever nurse him day and night and keep him from going off the hooks altogether? Did she ever hold his head in her arms while he was raving mad, and calm him down until he slept like a baby? Didn't he tell you himself, the last time you were here, Barry O'Carolan, that a wife could not have done more for him?"

"Yes; I heard him say that, Olga; but you haven't got any idea that you and the Capt'n are goin' to be married ever, have you?"

"Why not?"

The girl's militant attitude returned and her eyes snapped.

"I did not think so, Barry until he lost his money. While he was a rich man's son, of course I did not think of it; but now, when he has become poor like me, and just one of us, I don't see why he could not marry me.

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But now you say he will never do it, and I don't suppose there is any chance for me. Oh, Barry," . . the woman in Olga gained the upper hand, and she burst into tears . . . "I never thought I would love any man, but I have gone and done it, and until you came in here and told me he would never marry me, I really believed I had a chance."

Barry was not experienced in soothing the sorrows of a weeping woman, but in following his natural instinct he made no mistakes. With his arm about the girl, he let her sob on his capacious shoulder, patting her sympathetically and encouraging her to confide her troubles.

"It's all right, Olga," he assured her as her paroxysm subsided; "we all go through that at least once in our lives, and it does us good. Of course, it's natural you should love the Capt'n . . . any girl would do that . . . but you must get it right out of your head that there's any chance of your marryin' him, . . and his havin' money or not don't enter into it."

"It is all very fine for you to talk so wise, Barry O'Carolan, but what do you know about such things anyhow?"

Olga was surprised by the expression on his face.

"I guess I have said something," she added sympathetically . . . "I didn't mean to hurt you, Barry."

"I do know about such things, Olga," he replied soberly; "and because I know I have a right to tell you."

She looked at him in silence until a quick understanding came to her.

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"You don't mean . . ."

Barry bowed his head as he saw that she had guessed his secret.

"You . . . in love with the Stewart lady!"

Olga was breathless with surprise.

"And she turned you down?"

It was Barry's voice which choked now, but he was disgusted with the girl's lack of comprehension.

"She hasn't any idea that I care that way for her, and she never will know. You're the only one I've ever told, and if you give me away, I'll . . . but you wouldn't do that, Olga, for you know I told you just to make it easier for you. You and I are in the same boat. You can comfort the Capt'n all you like, and I can watch over Miss Lola, and they can be kind and helpful to us, but after you've said that you've said everythin'. Those people aren't in our lives, Olga, except the way the sun or moon is in our lives, and the more we get attached to 'em, the further away they really are."

Olga was very sober. What Barry had said struck her hard, for his words strengthened waverings in her own mind which until then had refused to crystallize. The surprising disclosure Barry had made of his own hopeless romance gave to his sympathy a real significance, and kept his advice, bitter as it was, from seeming impertinent.

"Then you think Richard will give me up," the girl said reluctantly. "He told me he was not going to marry the Stewart lady."

"He was kiddin' you," Barry retorted incredulously.

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"Where is he now? You thought he'd come right here, and so did I, but he hasn't; and if he isn't here there's only one other place he would go, and that's to Miss Lola."

Barry looked suggestively at the telephone Richard kept installed in the flat, and Olga understood what was in his mind.

"Do it," she exclaimed.

"Has Mr. Richard arrived yet?" he inquired of the maid, and on hearing the reply hung up the receiver.

"Half an hour ago," he announced, looking firmly at Olga . . . "There isn't any use fightin' against the laws of Nature," he declared; "those people aren't in our lives."

"I will never give him up!" the girl cried savagely. "He is not going to marry any one, but he means more to me than to any one else."

"Don't talk foolish, Olga," Barry checked her. "The Capt'n's goin' to be the head of the great Norton Manufacturin' Company, isn't he? When he marries, he'll take his wife into that big house up on the Hill. Can you see yourself in that house, Olga? If he said he wasn't goin' to marry Miss Lola, he only meant he wasn't goin' to do it now; but when the time comes, it won't be one of the girls from his factory he'll take into that house as his wife. I don't want to hurt you, Olga, . . . and I know how it does hurt, . . . but you've got to see things the way they really are."

"I will not! I will not!" she cried out like a spunky child. "I don't want to live in that house; I would rather live right here, with him."

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"And the Capt'n with a wife besides, livin' in the big house?"

"Why not?" Olga declared defiantly. "We have been here in this flat together, haven't we? Some of the best folks in the Bible had more than one wife, and I don't know as we are so much better than they were."

Barry looked at her in astonishment.

"You don't mean that, Olga, . . I know you don't. How about the wife in the big house?"

"That is her look-out. I would take good care to keep him more fond of me than he was of her."

Barry looked at her steadily.

"I've just told you what I think of Miss Lola," he said with more feeling than he had allowed himself to show. "After all she's done for us fellers I sure would hate to have anythin' you do keep her from bein' happy herself. She and the Capt'n are promised to each other, aren't they? You're not a thief, are you Olga, . . tryin' to steal somethin' you know belongs to some one else?"

"Then why does he kiss me and hold me in his arms?" she demanded rebelliously.

Olga's cry confirmed Barry's confidence in them both. If the girl's claim had been as strong as her words implied, she would have disclosed it then. His resentment vanished, and in its place came a tenderness toward his companion, for her distress was akin to his own. Hesitatingly he took Olga's hand in his and smiled into her troubled face.

"That's the Capt'n's way of showin' you he likes you," he explained, "but he don't mean anythin' by it

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except just that . . . Because the good Lord has given the Capt'n the most wonderful flower in the world to wear always in his heart isn't any reason why Mr. Richard shouldn't enjoy lookin' at another blossom, when it's as pretty as you are, Olga. The Capt'n knows he could never pick it, and he's been mighty careful not to bruise its petals, hasn't he, Olga?"

"Oh, Barry! You are so unkind to me!"

"No, I'm not. You'll see it the way it is after I go . . ."

Barry lifted himself onto his feet, and with a hand on each of Olga's shoulders looked straight into her eyes.

"Don't ever forget this, Olga . . . those people aren't in our lives."

CHAPTER XXIX

I

BARRY'S conversation with Olga left her more apprehensive than ever. Everything the girl had secured since she could remember had been by fighting for it, so the present necessity for struggle, unhappy as it made her, did not seem unnatural. For a time circumstances appeared to be conspiring in her favor . . . Richard's illness gave her an opportunity for companionship which could never have come otherwise; the intimacy which developed from their association showed her a side of his character which was so thoroughly democratic that she felt herself on a social equality with him; the loss of his fortune would force him in reality to become a working man. He treated her with a courtesy and consideration which no one else had ever shown her, and she knew he liked her. The occasional kiss no longer made her live in her friend's world, but brought Richard into hers. The caresses seeped into her blood until they possessed a significance far beyond the measure of friendship for which they had stood at first. To Olga, it was a certainty that Richard's sweetheart who lived in the wonderful house would never marry a man who worked . . . and except for her the girl feared no rival.

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The restoration of Richard's inheritance, the news of which spread over Norcross like wild-fire, placed him again in a world in which she had no part. This she realized fully, but after the delirious happiness of her day-dream she was slow to acknowledge an unpleasant fact. Barry's flat statement that she must abandon all thought of having her dream come true was so close to her unexpressed conviction that it hurt her, and when she was hurt she knew no other reaction than to fight.

II

It was in this mood that Richard found her in the late afternoon of the day following his acquittal, when he returned to the flat to gather together his belongings. Her greeting lacked the usual abandon, her face expressed an unspoken reproach. Richard looked at her in surprise.

"Aren't you glad to see me, Olga?" he asked.

"I am not sure," she replied guardedly. "I think you have forgotten me."

"Nonsense!" he cried. "What has happened to make my little nurse unhappy?"

"Why have you not come here sooner?"

"You know how many things I've had to do since I have been free," he explained.

"I never had too many things to do when you needed me."

"Come," Richard said, putting out his arm to draw her to him; "let me make you understand."

To his surprise, Olga refused to respond as usual

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to his advances. She drew back and held herself with a new dignity.

"Because I showed you that I loved you, while the Stewart lady was making up her mind, I made myself so cheap that now you think nothing of me. You kiss me, you hold me in your arms, you say pleasant things to me, and you . . . go to her. You can play with me no longer, Mr. Richard Norton. I can love better than the Stewart lady, and I can hate better too. Perhaps you care no more for my hate than you care for my love!"

Richard was amazed at the girl's vehemence. Her words hurt him less than the wounded expression in her face. The tears glistening in her eyes and the quiver in her lips belied her repellent attitude, and her hymn of hate was sung to music vibrant with affection. Nothing could have disclosed with such final conviction the fact that this wild daughter of Nature had given her heart to him with absolute abandon, and in spite of his forewarning from Lola and from that day at the jail this knowledge came as a blow. Even when Olga previously mentioned marriage, he could not take it seriously. Their stations in life were so far separated that even the possibility had never occurred to him. He had made himself believe that she accepted what he said to her. Now it was only too clear that the affection he had unwittingly awakened in this savage little breast was real, and demanded recognition. He had already wounded this devoted comrade of his by his belated understanding. Now he became aware that

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the wound must be made deeper before she could share the understanding with him.

It was a sobered Richard who drew the chairs closer together, and motioned her to sit down. With a protest in every movement she seated herself.

"I have been very much at fault, Olga," he said quietly. "I can't blame myself enough. When you told me your pretty conceit . . . that a kiss was wine sipped by two friends . . . I accepted it, and that was a cowardly thing to do."

"That was long ago. I told you that much had happened since."

"I know . . . I have no excuse for not realizing sooner that no matter what else we may call a kiss, it is a spark which is only too certain to start a conflagration in one heart or the other which may leave desolation in its wake. To me our kisses have always been the wine which you and I have sipped in friendship and in friendship only. I felt sure of myself. I thought I was sure of you, but I should have known that it was too much to expect. It was a sweet moment, Olga, when I first held your fiery little body in my arms, but I knew then as I know now that I should never have yielded to the temptation. We have been happy together, and it hurts me to see you unhappy now . . . Forgive me, Olga."

"I can forgive you, but that does not give you back to me," she cried. "You have made me love you, and now you tell me not to do so any more. It is an easy thing to say, but I am not strong enough to do it. You have brought to life something in me which I did not

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know I had. I may try to kill it, but if I succeed it will kill me, too, it is so great a part of me."

"What can I do?" Richard demanded, but the question was to himself rather than to Olga. "If I was going to marry Lola I might understand your feeling as you do; as it is, I shall not marry any one . . . I cannot even if I would."

"Oh, that talk about a wife interfering with your work! You only think it will! Every great man who ever did a great work was married . . . and it was usually the wife who made him great while he took all the glory!"

"You may be right, Olga, but I have to act as it seems wise to me . . . Lola understands . . ."

"But you see I do not, and that makes it different. She understands because she is not sure yet that she loves you . . . I do not understand because I know that I do love you."

"I have a great work ahead of me," Richard repeated helplessly. "If I am to make a success of it, I must give to it my undivided thought and effort."

"You will not be able to do that anyway, for you cannot help thinking of me even if we are not together."

"Let the thoughts be happy ones, Olga! My life must be with men . . . with employers who fail to appreciate their obligations, with workmen who fail to see their opportunities. Can't you understand there is no place for a woman in my life?"

"But I am a working-woman," she insisted tenaciously, "and I could help you. I can see that the Stewart lady has no place in your life, but I can also see

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that I have. I do not care to live in the big house on the Hill. I know I could never learn to carry myself like the Stewart lady. But I know the working-men as well as you. I have helped you with them before, and I can help you with them now."

Richard saw clearly the hopelessness of argument. Olga sensed it, and in her expectant face he read a hopefulness of victory. To say what would be necessary to make her fully understand would be brutal, and she had already suffered much. Comprehension would come slowly, and he must let time be his ally.

"If you really want to help," he said at length, "you must let me leave it there for the present . . . I came today to tell you that I want you to take this flat for your own, and to keep it for your own just as long as you like."

"Won't you be coming as you always have?"

"No, not as before, Olga; for I must look after my father's property, and must live in the big house. But I shall see you often, and we will still be comrades. You must not be unhappy, for that would make it hard for me to do my work. Why not let the future take care of itself? Surely we can plan together so that each may be happy . . . if not in the way you think now, then in some other way."

"There is no other way," the girl declared despondently, the confidence disappearing from her face.

Richard watched her as she passed through her struggle. She realized that she could gain nothing more by pleading, and she feared lest she lose what she still might keep. If Richard should go out of her life! The

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thought terrified her. He still liked her. He admitted it, and she knew that it was true. He had taken her at her word, and the present situation was of her making, not his. He had played the game straight with her, and she had no right to find fault. However deep the wound, she must conceal it now. Gradually the despair in her face gave way to a forced smile. Shyly, she extended her hand, as if in penitence for her earlier outbreak.

"I will try to make you happy," she said firmly. "That will be one way to prove how much I really love you. And I will try to make myself everything you want me to be, if perhaps some time in the future you found that I would not be in your way while you were doing your great work. But Richard . . . no matter what happens, do not forget me. If you cannot love me, keep right on liking me. You are a rich man now, and I a working-girl . . . but the honest love of any girl, whatever her station, will not hurt even a great man, will it, Richard?"

"No," he replied, touched by her devotion; "such love could be only an incentive. But what of the man's responsibility? Suppose he were inspired by such affection, was proud to acknowledge it. Suppose he would cut off his right hand rather than wound such love, yet knew that appreciation and gratitude could never be a just return. What then of him? Would it not be cowardly for him to accept from her more than he had to give?"

"Do not say it! . . ." she cried, fearful lest the opportunity had been given for a final severance. "Until

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I hear you say it, I shall never believe it, and you must not say it yet!"

"You are right, Olga. Nothing must interrupt our friendship, which has been and is very beautiful. If we try to force things, something may interfere. Why not leave it as it is, and enjoy together what we have had and what we still may have?"

"Yes . . . yes, we must!" she cried impulsively. "When I was a little girl and some one was going to say something I did not wish to hear, I would put my hands over my ears . . . like this. See . . . I do it now. We are still friends, but we must no longer sip the wine together. If my lips touched yours only once more . . . if I felt my arms again around your neck, I should never let you go. But if we do not do this, perhaps I shall become strong again, as I used to be, mistress of myself, afraid of no man. You have made me afraid, Richard, for the only time in my life, . . afraid of myself."

"That is my real Olga again!" he cried. "I am proud of you! Be your own sweet, strong self, and our friendship will remain a blessing to us both. Let me feel that I need not blame myself too severely for not protecting you better. Forgive me for not realizing earlier that you were beginning to care."

"I have nothing to forgive, Richard. You took my words as I spoke them. I thought then that I meant them. I will make myself mean them now. You have given me much. You have protected me, for if you had wished you could have done with me as you chose. Instead . . ."

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"That was unthinkable," he interrupted; "for we were friends."

As he spoke she gazed at him with eyes which could not conceal her overpowering love. She dared not trust herself further.

"Oh, Richard . . . you must go!" she cried. "I cannot stand it any longer!"

III

She listened to his footsteps retreating down the stairs, and then crossed over to the window where she could watch him until he passed out of sight. Long after he disappeared she stood there, as the twilight deepened. At length she turned away, and threw herself on her knees at the chair where Richard had been sitting. Barry's words came back to her with overwhelming force.

"He did not bruise the petals," she cried. "Thank God, . . because we were friends, he would not bruise the petals!"

CHAPTER XXX

I

RICHARD was too eager to put into practical operation the plans perfected in the solitude of his confinement to accept much time for recuperation, but a certain period for personal readjustment was imperative. Curiously enough, he had never thought of himself as occupying, even in the future, the position held by his father. James Norton's character has been so positive, his personality so dominating, that, as one of the Directors had once pointed out to William Stewart, the question of his successor had never even been considered. After the tragedy, the executive responsibility was divided, as no single person combined the practical knowledge of the works and the personal relations with the customers. When Treadway was accepted as Norton's heir to the business, his position was obvious, and the routine of the plant seemed to be settling down upon this basis.

The outcome of the trial, however, necessitated a complete business readjustment, and for this reason Stewart, who succeeded Norton as Chairman of the Board, was anxious to discuss matters with Richard at the earliest opportunity. James Norton's son was

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now the largest stockholder in the Company, and the Directors were waiting to learn his attitude before seriously considering the next step. It must be admitted that some members of the Board were considerably disturbed by the prospect of a reactionary influence in the Company. The business had grown and prospered through following the well-defined policy which was now threatened. Richard's antagonism to his father's views was common knowledge, and his close contact with the workmen filled these Directors with vague forebodings of deepest moment. Stewart alone was reassuring. He reminded them that other concerns had tested the idea of factory representation with favorable results, and this departure from the previous policy was the basis of Richard's plan.

II

Lola was eager to be present when Richard and her father had their first discussion. She liked to feel herself a part of Richard's work, not with full understanding, but with an enthusiastic sympathy which made up for her lack of business knowledge. She tried to be business-like in handling the organizations in which she was interested, for she had seen many instances where zealous war-workers, trying to capitalize the energy which made their earlier efforts successful by applying it to home charities, failed because they lacked the technical training required to make their work practical. Lola realized that if she was to enjoy the gratification of personal expression in her work, she must

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possess absolute knowledge of its demands, for the best intentions in the world fail to excuse disaster which comes from the over-confidence of amateurs.

It was a week after Richard's release that the conference was held in the Stewart library. During the interval he had spent many hours at the Company's office, and nearly as much time with the men. It was a new sensation to feel that the future policy of this great concern would be affected by his actions at this critical point in its history, and his responsibility impressed him deeply. Years before, his father had faced the same problem, and had built his foundations so firm that during his lifetime they had withstood every attack. In his day, James Norton had been considered a heretic in some of the radical departures he made from established business precedent. Would history repeat itself? Would the progressive ideas for which Richard now endeavored to force recognition seem to his son as archaic and unfair as the James Norton policy seemed to him? That, Richard assured himself, could not be, for the new era was built upon co-operation and mutual service—the basis of human society itself—as against competition and the struggle of self-interest. It was too much to hope that his generation would see the two elements of capital and labor wholly reconciled, but he did believe it possible to demonstrate the needlessness of conflict. If he could be a force in accomplishing this demonstration, he would be content to have his son, an employer, standing shoulder to shoulder with John Doe, the employed, united to gain from their combined efforts the rewards to which each

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was fairly entitled, producing the maximum output consistent with the health and welfare of the workmen, supplying the public at a price which made the burden of the cost of living rest equally upon all, and placing America in the vanguard of nations as a real and great democracy in industry as well as government.

III

"Well, young man," Mr. Stewart remarked by way of preliminary, after the three had gathered in the library, "my colleagues on the Board of Directors are anxiously awaiting the result of this conference. When I acted as your ambassador before, I made little success of my embassy; but the seed we planted then has produced some fruit. The Directors are agreed that a change in policy is necessary. Whether your plans will meet their approval or not I cannot say, but of course your present position as a stockholder will carry great weight. You will wish to present your own case to them, but it would interest me to discuss it with you now. Lola tells me your original ideas have expanded considerably since we talked them over before."

"'Expanded' is just the word, Mr. Stewart," Richard replied eagerly. "The idea has not materially changed, but the application is much broader. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss it with you because what I need is good, straightforward, constructive criticism . . . I would like to assume that the interests of the employer and the employed are the same, and then pick out the basic obstacles which at present inter-

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fere with the functionalizing of the two elements in co-operation."

"To find the obstacles, Dick, will be the easiest part of your task," Stewart commented. "I have read everything I could lay my hands on . . . profit-sharing, profit-halving, management-sharing, factory representation, and the like, but I must confess that high above every delightful theory some ever-present obstacle rears its head. When I urged the Directors to make a trial of your plan, I did it more because I felt that the employer is bound to accept every suggestion advanced by labor in an effort to bridge the chasm, than because I really believed it would succeed."

"There is no chasm, Mr. Stewart," Richard insisted. "To acknowledge one is to create it. The element in labor-unionism which prevents co-operation can exist only so long as class distinction is encouraged. That is why they make the possession of a union card of paramount importance, that is why they hammer so hard on organization. Suppose the labor union came out tomorrow with a statement that its function was three-fold . . . to secure for the working-man good wages, satisfactory working conditions, and the highest possible standard of craftsmanship; that any industrial organization which satisfied these would receive its endorsement whether it was working on a union or non-union basis; that the basis of its existence was its ability to serve. Could any workman afford to remain outside? Would the Directors of the Norton Manufacturing Company have any difficulty in doing business with such an organization?"

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"It would be for the Company's interest to co-operate with it to the fullest extent," Stewart admitted; "but that would only be possible after your ideal labor organization had worked out definite standards by which could be measured industrial health, fairness, and well-being."

"Of course!" Richard cried, delighted that Mr. Stewart was following him so closely. "At present the unions have no standards, . . . only requirements. Instead of establishing a standard by which to measure, they simply issue demands."

"To work out a sound labor union standard would be an interesting commission for a real philosopher," Stewart said meditatively; "it would embrace a complete working-theory of the relation of the workman to industry."

"What a privilege it would be!" Richard exclaimed enthusiastically. "Who would not be proud to be the author of such a document? At present the unions depend upon the power which comes through organization. Germany demonstrated the fallacy that power thus secured possesses permanency, but because during the war employers yielded temporarily, labor is as thoroughly deceived as to its real position as were the Huns up to the time of the second Battle of the Marne."

"You have hold of a big idea, my boy."

"It isn't my idea, . . . it is the combined result of everything we see around us. It is a common mistake to confuse the means and the end. The labor union ought to consider itself the means, and it doesn't. It is completely satisfied if it can enroll one hundred per

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cent. of the employees of a plant in its membership. The standard of wages, of workmanship, of conditions, is secondary so long as the union cards are there. In every other walk in life we have learned how much more valuable is the law of prevention than the law of cure."

"Why couldn't it be done?" Stewart demanded.

"It can be done!" Richard declared. "I have mixed a lot with the workmen, and as a class I have absolute faith in them. At heart they resent restricted output and the other union requirements which destroy their self-respect. They are intelligent, but they are suspicious. They have been deceived so many times in the past that they have come to look upon every advance made by their employers as having an underlying ulterior motive. Their confidence must be won by actual evidences of fair play; but they can be won if employers can be forced to give up their feudal instincts. You know better than I whether that is possible."

"That is already taking place," Stewart replied, . . . "not from choice or a change in heart, but because employers now realize that their future is irrevocably associated with the welfare of the employed. Our own Directors are included in that category. That is why they are willing to listen to you now that James Norton can no longer hold them back."

"I can't believe he would hold them back today if he were here," Lola said impressively.

"Habit is a powerful master," Stewart answered kindly. "Except for that, in view of that last document, Richard might have had the joy of his father's

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approval and co-operation. . . . But it is a satisfaction to know the truth at last! Too old to change his ways, but not too old to recognize the possible element of success in what his son suggested! If James Norton could compromise with his hard-set ideas, I see no reason why we should show ourselves less progressive! . . . Now, do you believe yourself competent to inaugurate the millenium at the Norton Manufacturing Company?"

"No," was Richard's prompt and definite reply; "but if I could have the backing of the Directors, I know I could convince the men of our sincerity. Then I should call in the ablest men I could find to work out a basis which both sides would consider possessed a fair chance of success. I would start out simply with my objective determined, and that objective should be maximum production, highest quality, best wages, perfect working conditions, fair play. I should establish standards which both sides would accept, and I should measure everything by these standards. I should have the factory represented in the management, and the management represented in the factory. We fought for a common cause in France, and we would fight for a common cause here. It can be done, Mr. Stewart, . . . not easily, for selfishness and short-sightedness are powerful obstacles; but unless we face the situation now we will be false to the best there is in us."

"Buckle on your armor, my son!" Stewart exclaimed, smiling. "I see before me the James Norton I knew over a quarter of a century ago. I see the same inspired confidence, the same dynamic energy, tempered

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now by the experiences of a new generation, fitted for the new conditions. Somewhere between conflicting elements there is always a balance. Why should it not be you? *Nos morituri te salutamus!*"

CHAPTER XXXI

I

DURING these weeks there was little place in Richard's life either for Lola or Olga. He was back now in the big house on the Hill, so the daily mingling with the Stewart family had come to an end; and Olga studiously avoided him. The big house would have been awesome through its emptiness and depressing from its memories except that Richard returned to it only to sleep, and so thoroughly exhausted from his strenuous days that he was indifferent to his surroundings. While James Norton lived, the house seemed filled by the tremendous force of his personality; Richard slipped in and out almost without Hannah's knowledge. She, poor soul, had now a new anxiety to replace those which had been relieved, in her fear that her "Mr. Richard" was killing himself by his long hours and arduous application.

II

Olga deliberately kept out of Richard's way as a part of her self-abnegation. Whenever his routine duties at the plant required him to walk by her machine, the girl's eyes became fastened on the unfinished work before them. After he passed, the eyes slowly raised themselves and watched the retreating figure. But she

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could see no reason why he should not stop long enough to give her the cheery greeting that was his custom. This caused her fresh alarm. Could it be that what he said to her during that last conference was really a polite dismissal? Her ever-watchful eyes and ears bore testimony to the fact that if Richard was neglecting her, the "Stewart lady" shared the slight with her, and this eased her apprehensions. Whatever the real situation, her thoughts were ever centered upon him. While she sat at her work, the machinery repeated his name with terrifying monotony; when she returned to the little flat, she found it filled with aching memories. Even those which had given her happiness before now brought pain because she knew they could be no more.

Those among Olga's friends who had commented upon her previous intimacy with Richard, found a new topic for conversation. It was to be expected, they admitted, that the heir to the Norton wealth would throw her over now that he had come into his own, but they were frankly surprised to find Olga turning to Tony Lemholtz after the bitter speeches she had made against him. These friends did not realize how much news of Richard the girl secured from his vituperative enemy, or how important Olga considered it to keep herself informed at all times of the plans Tony Lemholtz cherished in the back of his scheming, vindictive head. Knowing him as she did, Olga feared for Richard's safety, and the habit of watching over her charge still held strong. Except for this, she could not have paid the price, for Tony's gloating over the present situation was almost more than she could endure.

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"It's your own fault," he goaded her. "I told you all the time that a swell guy like him had no use for a workin'-girl. He was just playin' with you, he was, and you're lucky if you got by without gettin' burnt . . . I ain't so sure you did, at that, except that you let him get away from you without makin' any fuss. A girl like you would hold a feller if she had any grip on him, you bet."

"Shut your mouth, Tony, or else talk sense," Olga retorted. "He is tending to his business, and you had better do the same."

"He ain't tendin' to his business," was the hot reply. "He's buttin' into mine, and I'll make him sweat for it yet. He's made me look like a dirty two-spot in a phoney deck, he knocked my block off the day his old man was croaked. Now he's tryin' to run the union, . . him owning the most of the Company! It's a great game, but he can't put it across. He's foolin' some of the men, but most of us can see what he will do to us if he ever gets us under his heel. As another gentleman once said, 'You can't fool all the people all the time' . . . I'll get him yet!"

Tony could not have told who the other gentleman was, but the quotation served his purpose. Olga was too wise to offer any defence for Richard, for to be his champion would put Lemholtz on his guard. This unexpected acquiescence was completely misunderstood, as the girl intended it to be, and Tony attributed the lack of spirit to a belated awakening on her part to the real facts.

Aside from Tony's attitude toward Richard, Olga

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was most concerned regarding Lola. In fact, the "Stewart lady" had been a mystery from the beginning. To have the opportunity of loving Richard and not be sure of her own reciprocation was absolutely incomprehensible to Olga. Lola's restrained bearing, as she saw her from time to time, so much at variance with her own temperamental nature, always impressed the girl as cold and unresponsive; but after the tragedy Olga was forced to reconstruct her ideas. No girl who did not love a man would work as Lola did in Richard's behalf; and if she did love him, then the selfish hopefulness raised by Olga's analysis disappeared, and she considered the two as good as married.

The second readjustment came when Richard told her that he had renounced all present idea of marriage, and gave her the astonishing information that Lola understood and agreed with him. To Olga, a woman who loved him might understand, but that she would agree was unthinkable. There must be something beneath it all which he had not told her, and she longed to solve the mystery. If Richard was really planning to devote his energies to the cause of the working man, Olga was quite ready to believe the Stewart lady ill-suited to the life which this would require; but, by the same token, she considered herself ideally equipped to encourage and supplement Richard at every point.

III

The opportunity of meeting the "Stewart lady," and forming first-hand impressions, came unexpectedly.

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Olga was walking from the plant one noon when the trim roadster Lola was driving stopped beside her.

"May I take you where you're going?" the voice from the car asked.

Olga was too surprised to make a protest.

"For a long time I've wanted to know you," Lola continued as the girl silently climbed into the car. "Richard Norton has told me so much about you."

If Lola desired to become acquainted, Olga was no less eager. She did not deceive herself as to Lola's motive, for she easily understood that it was the same as her own; but she was quick to sense that the opportunity she longed for had at last arrived. There was a natural embarrassment when she actually found herself seated beside the girl she had successively disliked, feared, and envied. Lola, however, at once made her feel at ease.

"You're going to lunch, aren't you? I'm all alone at the house today . . . Why can't you come home and lunch with me?"

"Why . . ."

"Of course this seems very unusual to you," Lola followed up the advantage offered by the momentary hesitation, and the car still speeded toward the Stewart home. "I really know you better than you know me, and for a long time I have wanted to have a talk with you."

Olga decided quickly. The experience might prove unpleasant, but at least it offered her a chance she might never have again.

"I will come," she said simply; "but I am not so sure about you knowing me better than I do you. Mr. Rich-

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ard has told me a lot about you. When he was so sick he kept calling your name, but that was natural because then you and he were engaged to be married."

"You were a wonderful help to him, Olga, . . . do you mind? Richard always calls you that, and I never think of you except as 'Olga.'"

Lola's friendliness was bewildering to her companion. If their positions were reversed, Olga would not have been as generous.

"I did not know he was ill until it was all over," Lola added.

"He was not willing for you to know, for fear you would try to come to him. He knew that would not do, but with me it made no difference."

Lola started to make reply, but the car ran under the *porte-cochère*, and she decided to postpone the continuation of their conversation on this subject until a more propitious moment. She led Olga into the house, and during the simple luncheon they chatted of everything except the one topic which remained uppermost in the minds of both. Lola told her guest of the work with the ex-service men, and elicited her assistance, inquired as to conditions at the plant from the workmen's standpoint, and in general guided the conversation along safe channels until they found themselves seated in the deep recesses of a great divan in the library. Then Lola turned back to Olga's remark.

"Why should it be different for me to go to Richard's flat, Olga, than for you?" she asked.

"You are a lady, and people would take notice. They do not pay so much attention to us working-girls."

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"He might have been brought here . . ."

Olga winced.

"That was what I feared," she acknowledged frankly.

Lola had every desire not to wound her, and she saw that she was on dangerous ground.

"Even if he had been brought here, I couldn't have done for him what you did. Richard has told me what a wonderful nurse you were."

"It is easy to take good care of Mr. Richard," Olga said impulsively. Then her eyes dropped.

Lola studied the girl carefully. She was winsome in her frankness. Her devotion to Richard was only too apparent in every word she spoke, and a heavy load fell on Lola's heart as she realized what Richard had so little foreseen or comprehended. It was impossible to fence with Olga; she was too ingenuous, too honest in the expression of her own feelings.

"You are very fond of Richard, aren't you, Olga?" Lola asked quietly.

The girl looked up quickly. She seemed surprised that her heart had been so easily read. She tried to smile, but the attempt was unsuccessful.

"What is the use of lying?" she answered, the old defiant attitude returning. "I suppose I ought not to say it to you, but you asked me, and I will not lie to you. I am more than fond of Mr. Richard. I love him, . . . more than you ever did, or you would not have agreed with him about his not marrying."

Olga was prepared for an indignant protest from her companion, but none came. Instead, Lola placed her arm around the girl's shoulders. Her action sur-

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prised Olga, and she felt thoroughly ashamed of her outburst.

"I suppose you do love him as much as a girl like you can," she modified her previous statement; "but folks brought up your way cannot have the same feelings as working-girls. We have to fight for everything we get. It makes us hate harder and love stronger. You could not understand."

"Aren't you taking a great deal for granted, Olga?"

"Why, our whole lives are made up of sacrifice! What have you ever had to give up in order to get something else?"

"I do understand," Lola insisted, . . . "perhaps better than you know. What sacrifices I have made in my life are nothing compared with yours; but until you have seen me fail you cannot say that I wouldn't prove equal to the test if a great sacrifice was demanded of me."

Olga looked at Lola intently, instantly challenged by her statement.

"Do you mean that?" she demanded quickly. "Listen . . . I will give you the test. We both love Richard Norton. Except for you, I know that I could marry him. You never made a real sacrifice, I have never known anything else. Give Richard to me. This is your chance. Will you take it?"

"I would take it in a moment," Lola answered deliberately, "if I thought it would mean his greatest happiness. You have no claim on me which warrants such a sacrifice; the fact that I love him gives such a claim to Richard . . . But why talk of this now?"

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He is not going to marry any one, so the sacrifice has come to us both."

"The reason he does not wish to marry is because he thinks it will interfere with his work for the men. Do you not see that I could help him much more than you because I am one of the working-people, and understand them better?"

"Whenever Richard feels that to be so, I will stand aside."

"You will?"

Olga's expression manifested her unqualified astonishment.

Lola bowed her head in reiteration, and as she did so Olga thought she saw tears glistening in her eyes. She looked again to make sure.

"You are not really crying?" she asked incredulously.

"How foolish of me!" Lola exclaimed, drying her eyes. "You touched on something which is very precious to me, but I didn't mean to show any one how precious it is. I have given up all thought of marrying Richard. I have steeled myself to look at things the way he wishes me to. But nothing can keep me from loving him with all the strength I have, so long as I live."

IV

It was a day of novel sensations to Olga. These people who lived in beautiful houses and were surrounded by every luxury, were human after all! This girl beside her was crying, just as she had cried that afternoon when Richard left her! Let them exchange po-

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sitions, and there would be little difference between them . . . they were sisters under the skin!

Olga was sobered by her discovery. Half hesitating at her temerity, she slipped her arm about Lola's waist. Receiving no rebuff she grew bolder.

"I never knew you folks had feelings like that," she said in a low voice. "Perhaps you have made a sacrifice already that I would not make when Richard asked me to. I want him to be happy, just as you do, and he probably knows better than either one of us what is best for him. I did not mean to hurt you. I have been unhappy. Until today I hated you, but it was I who did not understand. I cannot hate you now."

"We both understand each other better," Lola reassured her, smiling through her tears. "I'm so glad that I yielded to the impulse to take you home with me today. Neither one of us can blame the other for loving Richard. Each of us has that right, and needs not be ashamed to acknowledge it. We must let it be a bond between us, instead of something to keep us apart. We both will wish him success and happiness."

Olga rose in silence to take her leave. At the door she held Lola's proffered hand, and before releasing it touched it to her lips.

"I guess my most selfish wish would be that he never marries," she said quietly. "So long as he could get a girl like you he would never look at me . . . I did not know before that there were such people in the world!"

CHAPTER XXXII

I

A PROBLEM which concerned Richard deeply was how to work out his plan in such a way as to capitalize the ex-service men in industry. From his own experiences he recognized the inability of these returned soldiers to go back into the old grooves after having realized so tremendous a momentum in a new and different direction; but he refused to accept the bromidic statements that they were drained emotionally, or that the baptism of fire, instead of uplifting, had made them unfit or unwilling to return to their former positions, and thus produced a class of social misfits.

“If the world has been sorely disappointed in the returned soldier,” he explained to his Directors, “so has the returned soldier been sorely disappointed in the world into which he returned. It was natural that he should be gratified by the extravagant praise given for his sacrifice, his heroism, and his consecration to the cause. It was agreeable to him to accept the theory of the regenerated soldier. He believed in the talk about the strange light of vision in the eyes of men who had stood face to face with death, because he had seen

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it. He was willing to admit that he had been purged by fire and sword. Then, when he discovered that all this idealization of him was only a passing phase of society, a distrust came into his soul which thus far nothing has relieved; and out of this bitterness was born a desire to force society to recognize its obligation by paying him a bonus. Think of it! Asking for a bonus when we haven't yet taken care of the disabled soldiers! But when these artificial excrescences are scraped off, underneath is the real product of the war: men whose inventive and constructive instincts have been sharpened by the premium which war places upon human ingenuity and skill, and whose desire to express these instincts is dominating. The factory as run to-day offers no scope for this, and that is what causes unrest. We must turn this liability into an asset."

II

They were hard days but rare days to Richard, filled with opposition and discouragement, but never void of the ever-present confidence that success must come because it ought to come. He tried to gauge his progress, but there was nothing by which to measure it. The Directors at last gave their consent to the employment of experts, and for a time everything seemed in so chaotic a condition that all except Richard lost hope. Alec Sterling was a tower of strength, but his unswerving support was an expression of loyalty rather than confidence. He knew that some change was essential in the relations between employer and employed, but what that change ought to be had never been clear to him.

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Richard's enthusiasm contributed a new element to his solid but stolid Scotch nature, which sensed the importance of an innovation yet shrank from taking the initiative.

To the ex-service men Richard presented his problem differently, but to the same end. With the new authority given him by the Directors, he placed the case squarely before them.

"Boys," he said, "we fought for something in France we didn't get, and it's partly our fault and partly our misfortune. Now it's up to us to correct the fault, and to turn the misfortune into an advantage. The trouble with us is that we haven't carried on. After doing our job over there, and being received here at home as if we were little tin gods, we've laid down and made people think a whole lot of things about us that aren't so. It isn't a cheerful experience to be a hero one day and an ordinary workman the next; and *ordinary* is just what we've been. Instead of making use of our experience and leveling things up here at home, we've been disgusted when the people around us forgot there had been a war at all, and by standing still we've let them level us down. That's where we have been to blame. We have known right along that our experiences have made us more capable and more valuable to any industry we may be in, but the employers haven't known it, and they haven't let us show them. That has been our misfortune.

"Now, those of us right here are going to have the chance to show our class in civilian life just as we did in the army. The Directors are willing to try out the

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experiment of letting us have something to say in the way this business is run. They have given me some authority, and they're going to give me more, to make good on the statements I've made as to what you boys can do. If you back me up, we'll turn out better work and more of it, we'll get more out of it ourselves than we ever did before, we'll be able to retain our self-respect because we'll be putting ourselves into our work, and because we'll have the chance to show the best there is in us. If you don't back me up, then there's nothing to it. We'll all settle down into the old routine, and let Germany win the peace. They're working over there, boys. They've learned their lesson. They realize that to pay their indemnity and get back on their feet they've got to produce five times as much as they ever did before, and they're going to do it. In Germany they're raising blisters on the mailed fist, and they call it economic enthusiasm! That's something we need right now. We didn't let the Huns beat us over there, boys, . . . are we going to let them beat us here?"

The union officials were unalterably opposed to every suggestion of co-operation between the management and the shop. Richard's ideas, successfully introduced, meant the end of their arbitrary power. If the men themselves could deal directly with those conducting the business end, and secure their "rights" by discussion rather than by the force of mob organization, then the usefulness of the agitator was over, and he must exchange his profession of lung-thinking for the more productive though less agreeable pursuit of honest labor.

The men themselves, while more non-committal than

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Richard would have liked, were not antagonistic as a class. The fear of losing their union cards was their greatest apprehension. If they could actually feel themselves an integral part of the business itself without risking the loss of something else, they recognized in the new relations a return of their self-respect and a satisfying of their innate yearning for constructive expression which the introduction of labor-saving machinery destroyed. But they would make no definite effort themselves to secure the change. If Richard could bring it about, if the union did not specifically proscribe such action, if they were free to return to the old conditions after the experiment in case they preferred them to the new . . . this was as far as they could be brought to commit themselves. But passivity was better than opposition, so Richard worked on. The fact that the men as a whole liked him and trusted him was in itself an impetus.

III

The one striking triumph which Richard had achieved was John Sibley, and he cherished him as fondly as Lola cherished Barry, . . as a symbol rather than an individual. Richard had expected great things of Sibley when he returned to civilian duties, and had been disappointed. He had seen him in France, as he rose by sheer character and effort from private to captain. He had seen the personal asset grow as Sibley grasped each opportunity and reached each new objective. Richard was proud to hear the praise spoken by his superior officers of this worker from the Norton plant,

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and he felt sure that John Sibley, multiplied not by two million perhaps, but even by two hundred thousand, would introduce so powerful a leaven into American life that this vision which had been the product of his convalescence at Toul could not fail to come true.

Then he had seen Sibley slip backwards upon his return. At first he blamed him for not living up to himself; later he sympathized with him. Except for Lola, Richard would have found the same level. As a result of her inspiration and the opportunity his incarceration gave for introspection, he himself had found new anchorage. The fact that Richard had suffered from the same reaction made it possible for him to make an understanding approach to Sibley, and little by little he brought him back to a realization and expression of his best self.

It was Richard's reference to Germany that finally struck the note. The one conviction which had ever strengthened in Sibley's mind was that the Huns had received slight punishment for the cataclysm they precipitated. One of his deepest grievances with the world was that a more drastic penalty had not been exacted to make them pay for the barbarism he had seen with his own eyes. While in action, he had learned to fear their duplicity far more than their boasted might, and in what Richard said he saw that there was occasion still to fear this same characteristic in peace.

"Is what you told the boys about the way the Huns are working the honest truth?" Sibley demanded of Richard the first time he saw him after the conference with the ex-servicemen.

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"Only a part of it," Richard replied, overjoyed at last to have him take the initiative when previously he had simply listened, with apparently little interest. "I barely touched on it, but Germany is fooling the world now just as she did in 1914. Her military budget and taxes have been reduced while those of all the other countries have been increased; she makes an eight-hour day the legal limit, and works fourteen. While England stands still in production and burns German coal, while we are slowed down by our strikes and other efforts to reduce working hours and increase wages, Germany is building railroads and new harbors and spinning the cotton which the rest of the world rejects. While the allies are struggling among themselves and with their domestic troubles, Germany is developing an industrial army which will have the world by the throat within ten years."

"They can't do it unless we let them," Sibley declared.

"We are letting them . . . Have you given the factory one single day's work since you came home, John Sibley, that represented one hundred per cent. of your capacity?"

"Aw, cut out personalities," was the retort. "I've given them the union limit."

"I know you have, and I'm only asking you the question because you will understand better what I mean if it is applied to yourself. When I say 'you,' I mean union labor. We ask for the highest wage ever known in the history of industry, and refuse to give a corresponding equivalent. Except for that, we could hold the wage, and be entitled to receive it; but in exchange

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for honest money, John Sibley, you and I, and the hundreds of thousands of workmen throughout the country, are giving counterfeit labor. The union restricts our output, and we let them get away with it when we know it's all wrong."

"Where would we be today without the union?" Sibley demanded.

"Still under the heel of the employer," Richard acknowledged frankly. "Don't think for a minute that I'm talking against labor unionism. Without organization the working-man would never have secured what belongs to him. What I'm objecting to, is the use made by the leaders of the union today of the power which has come to them, . . . assuming the same arrogant and unfair attitude toward the employers which they properly complained of when the boot was on the other leg. I'm working for fair play, John, on both sides. Most employers have learned their lesson, and realize that it is for their interest to play the game with their men; the union hasn't learned the lesson yet. The war gave labor unexpected power, and the leaders are still intoxicated by its fumes. It's for you and for me, John, and for the thousands of other ex-service men who have had their eyes opened and their vision broadened, to sober these toppers up, to put aside our suspicions, to demand our rights but to acknowledge the rights of others, to meet the employers half-way, to stop bickering and work, work, work, so that America's production may keep pace with Germany's. In that way we can prevent the Huns from getting a commercial strangle-hold on the world and on us. We can't revo-

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lutionize the universe or even our own country; but we can make a start right here in Norcross if men like you will back me up. Will you do it, John?"

"I sure will!" Sibley declared, affected by Richard's magnetism; and from that moment the new movement had no stronger ally.

CHAPTER XXXIII

I

SPRING came reluctantly to Norcross that year. Even Nature seemed to feel the strain which the town had endured, and dragged itself along with slow-functioning footsteps which denote fatigue. Nothing could settle down into a routine until the untoward events which had shocked the usual tranquility of the community had completed their circles and passed into history.

The strike was now only a memory, for the Norton plant was running smoothly, with Richard's innovations fully installed and under critical observation. Thus far, the new system of co-operation between the management and the men gave promise of success in spite of individual opposition on the part of the radicals, who still fought to retain their former prestige and power, now waning. The trial of William Treadway revived the excitement occasioned by the tragedy; but with his conviction this circle completed itself, and Spring and the town of Norcross were eager to forget the past, to enter into full enjoyment of the present, and to look with confidence into the future.

But when at last the snow-drops and the crocuses de-

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lighted Barry's heart by breaking through the dull earth, Nature seemed inclined to atone for her tardiness. The hyacinths and the daffodils followed fast, and the early summer flowers were not far behind. The spirit in the air was contagious. Richard's doubts and apprehensions faded away, and were replaced by assured confidence that his vision was not illusive. William Stewart found tremendous satisfaction in the fruits of his new activities, discovering the greater joy of having his books the means rather than the end, of turning dreams into realities. The workmen came to speak of the Norton Manufacturing Company as "our" business, and took unlimited pride in their individual contributions to its success. Richard Norton, to be sure, was now General Manager, but there was no "boss," and the responsibility for success or failure was so broadly distributed that the workers were entitled to their self-conceit.

II

To Lola, the late coming of Spring was a relief, for she had not yet found herself. Her happiness in the accumulative success at the works should perhaps have been sufficient to enable her to join in the chorus of optimism; but with the gratification she felt in Richard's triumph was coupled an over-powering sense of his personal responsibility to this factory-girl, who by now had completely won her heart. Lola had accepted his judgment regarding their own marriage, but since her visit with Olga she had troublesome questionings as to whether he had assumed more than his

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proper prerogative in deciding the situation for all three. Olga and she had rights as well as Richard.

Lola was more and more drawn to the girl as she learned to know her better. The fiery, unmanageable temper came under control as a result of chastening experiences, and the "Stewart lady" admitted frankly to herself, if to no one else, that if Richard really intended to devote his life to his announced project, what Olga lacked in education and social finish was at least offset by her personal attractiveness, her unwavering loyalty, and her knowledge of the class he wished to reach.

Olga had never accepted Richard's dictum that marriage would interfere in any way with the life-work he had laid out for himself; Lola accepted it blindly. Now she believed that Olga was right, and that Richard had exaggerated the necessity. She wondered if perhaps the thought of personal sacrifice had not over-appealed to him. Seized by the idea, it would be natural for him to feel that complete consecration to the cause demanded the voluntary contribution of his entire personality. Greater men than Richard Norton had taken unlimited satisfaction in the mere fact of their martyrdom! She did not question his sincerity, but she began to form her own opinions, and these proved to be at variance with his.

III

At last Lola could keep her thoughts to herself no longer. Some one must bring Richard to an understanding, and it was on her that the duty obviously

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fell. It was not difficult to make the opportunity, for he was now a frequent caller at the Stewart house, which really was more a home to him than his own. He and Mr. Stewart saw much of each other, both from their mutual business interests, and because of the friendship which had developed between them. Maturity and experience contributed much in tempering the dynamic energy and optimism of youth; courage and ignorance of defeat introduced a new and welcome feature to a life which had considered itself fixed in its middle-age rigidity, now becoming flexible.

Richard had promised to let Lola help in the working out of his plans, and he undoubtedly felt that he had done so. The girl, however, came to realize that the early confidences were made to her because at that time there was no one else with whom he could talk freely. When later he was thrown more with men of affairs, the necessity of Lola's comprehending sympathy disappeared, and what she learned now of his work and plans came from listening to conversations between him and her father. She was disappointed, but she understood, and no word was ever spoken to express her unfulfilled expectations.

One evening, after the usual quiet family discussion, in which Mr. and Mrs. Stewart were a part, the two young people were left alone, and Lola seized her opportunity.

"The new scheme is working out more rapidly than you expected, isn't it, Dick?"

"Indeed it is," he replied with enthusiasm. "The results are proving so beneficial to both sides that they

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are unanswerable arguments. As far as our plant is concerned, my hardest work is over; and as for spreading the gospel of good will in industry, we are already flooded by inquiries from big organizations all over the country. Instead of going out into the world to preach it, I can point to actual performance; instead of arguing on the basis of theory, I can show how practical it is in operation."

"Then it won't be necessary after all for you to sacrifice your whole life to your ideals, will it?"

Richard looked at her questioningly. Then he thought he understood. Smiling, he took her hand in his.

"I must have seemed selfish to you these months, dear, but I really felt it necessary to forget everything but that great common cause we both believe in. Perhaps I seemed more selfish than I really was, because I knew you understood. But we have gained our first objective now, Lola dear, without any casualties, and we can be ourselves again. You have never doubted, . . . have you? . . . that my love for you was stronger than everything else except my duty to translate my vision and my experience into something real?"

"No, Dick," she answered frankly. "I have never doubted that; but I'm not quite so sure that there have been no casualties."

He looked at her surprised.

"But you have understood?"

"Yes," Lola replied deliberately; "I have understood, . . . better, I fear than you. How about Olga?"

Richard's face sobered.

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"Surely you could never be jealous of her! That wouldn't be like you. I've never . . ."

"Not jealous, Dick. You might break my heart, but you could never make me jealous. There are some things you haven't sensed because you have been so engrossed with your work. Olga loves you, Dick, and she is suffering more than you have any right to let her suffer."

For a moment he looked at her with an expression Lola had never before seen. She expected him to insist again that she was wrong, but this time there was no such protest. Instead, he rose and went to the window, looking out into the darkness. What he saw was a pair of great brown eyes, glistening from unshed tears, lips which quivered as they bravely smiled. What he heard was not Lola's words, but a voice struggling to conceal the love which found expression in every accent, crying, "Oh, Richard, . . . you must go! I cannot stand it any longer!"

At last he turned.

"You are right, Lola," he acknowledged, to her surprise. "I realize it now, but my knowledge has come late, Heaven knows! I did look upon her as a child. Even when I first noticed that her affection for me seemed to ask for possession, I thought it nothing more than a child's desire for a new toy. Since I unexpectedly discovered the real situation I have thought of little else, for I care for her a great deal, and I am eternally grateful. I have told her frankly . . . almost brutally . . . that I do not love her. She is wounded . . . naturally, and I blame myself for my stupidity. There

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is so little one can do. For one thing, I mean to give her every opportunity to make something of herself, but that doesn't take away her present pain. Yet what more can I do?"

"Of course, I am looking at it from a woman's standpoint," Lola replied. "Perhaps that is all you can do, . . . perhaps it is more than you ought to do . . . but I'm wondering if we are holding true to the creed you and I boast. You have accepted everything, and given nothing in return. We must be true to our creed, no matter what the cost. Don't you think so?"

"Are you suggesting that I ought to marry Olga?"

"I'm not sure . . . I am groping in the dark . . . I'm asking you."

Richard rose again and walked slowly about the room as he always did when deeply affected. Lola watched him with a look in her eyes which, had he seen, would have made his question unnecessary.

"Does this mean that you no longer care for me?"

"I don't believe that enters into the question, dear," she answered with more feeling than she had allowed herself to show. "You were speaking of the casualties in attaining your objective. It may be that I am one of these, it may be that it is Olga. I'm not making any statement, Dick; I'm just placing the matter squarely before you. Your final judgment will be right."

He returned to the chair where Lola was sitting and seated himself upon the arm. All resentment had disappeared, for he realized how much in earnest she was. Knowing her as he did, he could but admire the

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courage and the sacrifice which lay behind her words. As he looked at her, she seemed the embodiment of that spirit which was the single worth-while product of the war. In France, she would have sacrificed herself willingly for her ideal; tonight she was no less willing. There remained no question in his mind of her love for him, . . . and in his own heart he discovered a longing for her which was beyond anything which had come into his life. He was conscious of the thought that had this overpowering love possessed him earlier, he might not have been strong enough to put it aside even for the great common cause.

"Lola," he said quietly, but with such intensity in his voice that there could be no misunderstanding him, "you are wonderful! I have always loved you. I have never had a place in my heart for any one else; but until now I have not known how much you really meant to me. You and I have been through experiences which would never have come to us except with the whole world upside down. I thought I had kept on my feet better than most people, but I, too, have been affected by the madness. You have been steadfast, you have been true to every ideal. When I wavered, you steadied me, . . . and I thought it my own strength! What place can you have in your life for one who assumed attributes to which he had no shadow of a claim?"

"Oh, Dick!" she cried; "you make it so hard for me! Whatever the cost may be to us, we must think of Olga, who has had nothing but sacrifice in her life. You gave her a new horizon. You made life for her something beyond anything she knew or craved before. We must be

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fair. But, Dick, . . O Dick, my darling! . . don't ever think I don't love you! It is because our love must be worthy of what you and I know love ought to be, that we must think of her."

Richard again rose and walked back and forth trying to think of some solution of the problem.

"I can't believe that happiness could come to her through anything that brought misery to us," he said soberly, at length. "We must take time to think it out. Surely there is some way other than that which wrecks our lives just as we have discovered what they might contain."

"I hope so, Dick! . . oh! my very dear, I hope so!"

Richard held out his arms to her with such yearning in his face that she could no longer resist.

"This at least is our moment . . . Come!"

Without taking her eyes from his, she rose slowly from the chair and permitted him to fold her in his great arms.

"It is this that counts!" he whispered.

The anxious lines disappeared from Lola's face. She yielded herself wholly to the joy of the moment, deliberately forgetting that it was but a haven she had found and not the port where she might gain protection from the storm. She raised her eyes shyly, and smiled into his. Then their lips met.

"Oh, Dick!" she cried as he released her, . . "my Dick . . . always . . . whatever happens!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

I

RICHARD found Olga in the little flat which he had turned over for her occupancy. She heard the familiar footsteps upon the stairs, and when Richard reached the top landing she was waiting for him in the open doorway. In her face pleasure mingled with apprehension.

"You recognized my step?" Richard inquired, surprised now to find her there.

"Is there anything strange in that?" she asked, not defiantly, as had been her wont, but with a sad, wistful smile which hurt him. "I wondered if I should ever hear it again."

"Surely you could never believe that, after being such comrades, I would let you drop out of my life!"

"You will be a great man, Mr. Richard Norton, and a factory-girl does not belong in the life of a great man."

They entered the room and seated themselves. Both felt the restraint, and Olga made no effort to relieve it.

"When I say to you what I have come to say," Richard replied seriously, "you will understand how far I am from the exalted position you suggest, and you will

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also realize how much a part of my life I consider one little factory-girl, who is not very distant now."

She waited for him to continue.

"Until we talked things over that last time," he went on, "I was not convinced that you seriously cared for me . . ."

"I told you so, over and over again."

"I know you did, and I should have believed you. Instead, I thought it was just your way of saying that you liked me."

"I promised you that I would try to turn my love back into friendship," Olga reminded him, striving bravely to prevent her voice from breaking. "Truly, I am doing my best to keep my promise."

"Dear Olga!" Richard cried, affected by her struggle. "It is for me to turn my friendship into love."

She looked at him with uncomprehending eyes. She had changed even since he saw her last. Her face was still beautiful, but it lacked the color which had previously added so great a charm. Yet it was not the face which had changed so much as her manner. The hoydenish abandon had disappeared long since. Now she displayed a calm self-control he scarcely recognized. She sensed what was passing through his mind.

"Is it an improvement?" she asked. "If you blame yourself for some things you must take credit for others. As for my loving you . . . Miss Lola has forgiven me, and so must you."

"Don't, Olga, I beg of you!" he cried. "You and Lola make me feel contemptibly small when you assume responsibility which belongs to me. I can never repay

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you for what you did for me, yet in return I have made you unhappy . . . the one thing I would have avoided!"

He hesitated for an instant, then asked the question abruptly.

"Do you think you could really be happy as my wife, Olga?"

For a moment surprise filled her eyes, then all the color which Richard missed returned to her face.

"Did Miss Lola tell you to ask me that?" she inquired at length.

"No; she urged me to decide, and I have done so."

"Does that mean that you love me?"

The momentary hesitation gave her a truer answer than the evasive words which followed.

"There would be no question of that, dear, if we were married."

The look which came into Olga's face was that which Richard would always remember when he thought of her in later years. He had called her beautiful, but never had she seemed so radiantly lovely. Her eyes never left his, and into them came a look . . . inscrutable as it was tender, . . . which he had seen before only in the eyes of Mona Lisa.

"Then you have discovered that you can be married and still accomplish your great work?" she inquired.

"I know now that I can't possibly accomplish it unless I am."

"And you will marry me?"

"Yes, Olga; and I will do my best to make you happy."

The girl again relapsed into silence. The moment

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was too delicious to be hastened. Her dream had come true! What others had mocked at was within her grasp. All that was necessary would be to forget what these last months had taught her, and to justify herself by declaring, with her former fierceness, that the buffeting old world owed her anything she could get out of it in compensation for the price it had made her pay.

But forgetfulness was not possible after the lessons learned from her association with Lola. Previously, it would have been class against class; now it was one woman's heart against another's. Lola, surrounded by every luxury, who had never been forced to practice the self-restraint which formed a part of Olga's daily life, stood ready to make the supremest sacrifice a woman knows. Olga had not believed this at first; it was too incredible. Later, as she came to understand her better through Lola's determination to protect her, she was convinced of her sincerity. Now that Richard had come with his offer of marriage, she knew that Lola's words were as true as her heart. If a girl brought up as she had been could prove herself so loyal to her ideals, what of Olga, to whom sacrifice had become second nature?

There was but one more question which she put to Richard.

"Do you love Miss Lola?"

It was one he could not answer by evasion. The great brown eyes, looking so tenderly and trustfully into his, demanded an admission of the truth which they already knew.

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"You know that I have always loved her, Olga. I have told you so before; but that does not mean that I am less honest in asking you to be my wife."

Olga knew now beyond a doubt that the words she longed to hear could never be spoken. She was grateful to him that he had given her the opportunity of hearing his declaration. She would like to believe that if there had been no "Stewart lady" he might have loved her, yet, except for Lola, Olga was well aware that the present situation had been an impossibility. She had acknowledged to herself long since that Richard and Lola were truly mated; now she knew well that to come between them would be to wreck three lives instead of one.

"Something good must come from our friendship, Richard," she said to him. "My life began that day at East Lake. It is like Miss Lola to say to you what she did say; it is like you to give up what you know is best for yourself in trying to make me happy. It is not like me to refuse to accept what would be my greatest joy, and because I am doing what is so unlike me, you can believe that my friendship is even stronger than you knew . . . We must not talk of marriage. You do not love me, yet you ask me to be your wife; because I do love you, I do not accept. I am glad you have discovered that there is something greater than your work, for even I knew that long ago! Go back to Miss Lola and tell her that you have done your duty, and that in doing it you have made me happy. Tell her that I love her for what she has done for me, just as I love you for what you have tried to do."

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"But what of you?" Richard demanded, deeply affected by this display of a nobility of character which he had not realized she possessed.

"So long as you are happy, I shall also be happy," the girl replied simply. "I will believe that somewhere in the world there is a place for me. You will be a great man, Richard Norton, and people will clap their hands and shout your praises. But you must not forget your little comrade. Far away from the crowd, around the corner, even though you cannot hear her, she will be shouting your praises too."

II

Their conversation was interrupted by a sudden knock at the door. Without waiting for it to be answered, Tony Lemholtz entered, and stood on the threshold leering at them.

"So you're back again, are you?" he said unsteadily to Richard. "Can't keep away from her even if you are a great man now, can you?"

Olga placed a restraining hand on Richard's arm as he rose with dangerous calmness.

"You have been drinking again," she charged Lemholtz.

"S'all right," he retorted thickly. "I'm not goin' to start anythin' . . . yet. Want to talk business with the big boss."

"I'll see you at the office in the morning," Richard told him.

"You'll see me here . . . right now," Tony cor-

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rected . . . "I've been fired. What you goin' to do about it?"

"You can refer the matter to the Shop Committee if you think an injustice has been done you," Richard answered, restraining his resentment at the man's insolence to Olga as well as to himself.

"I've done that, and they've decided against me. Now it's up to you."

"No," Richard replied; "you still have the privilege of appealing to the General Joint Committee on Adjustment."

"Appeal nothin'!" Tony exclaimed. "The Shop Committee was unanimous against me, so I can't appeal."

"Then that ends it," Richard remarked with finality. "You have been tried by your fellow-workers and convicted. What more can you ask?"

"You can put me back if you like . . . you can. You're the head of the whole shebang, ain't you? Now, will you or won't you?"

"I certainly will not," Richard declared flatly. "If the men had voted to let you stay, I would have accepted the decision. As they didn't, you will have to do the same . . . Come. If that's what you're here for, let's go along together, and leave Olga in peace."

"I'm not going, and you're not going . . . yet."

Lemholtz half-sang the words, standing in front of the door with legs well apart, assuming a belligerent attitude.

"Go along with Mr. Richard," Olga urged, "and come back when you're sober."

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"*Mister* Richard!" he repeated after her . . . "*Mister* Richard! Now I ain't in his employ I can tell him what I damn think of him, can't I? Think you can take my girl and play with her till you get tired, and then throw her over, do you?"

"Don't pay any attention to him," Olga begged Richard. "He's half-drunk, and he's always ugly when he's this way."

"It's all right, Olga," Richard reassured her. "I just want to get him out of here so that he won't annoy you."

"Want to get me out, do you?" Tony overheard a part of the conversation. "All right, . . try it . . . Can't be done."

Richard paid no attention to him, but turned to Olga.

"I am responsible even for this brute's insults to you," he said contritely. "We can't finish our talk tonight, but we must do so soon. I'm not satisfied to leave it here."

"Leave what . . . where?" Lemholtz demanded.

"There's nothing more to say," she whispered, not heeding the interruption. "Why leave it open . . . for all our sakes?"

"A little later," Richard insisted gently; "you and Lola and I." Then he turned to Lemholtz.

"Come on," he said. "I'll see you home and in bed where you can sober up."

"Can't be done," Tony repeated. "Touch me, and I'll kill you!"

Richard dodged the blow aimed at him, and caught his antagonist firmly around the waist, pinioning his

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arms so that he was absolutely helpless. Then he swung him over his shoulder, holding him with a grip against which Tony's struggles were in vain.

"Open the door, Olga."

Richard laughed aloud at the ridiculousness of the situation.

"I'll take this naughty boy home and spank him . . . Good night."

Olga did not share his mirth. She could see the vindictive hatred on the swarthy face, and it frightened her.

"Be careful, Richard," she implored. "He dislikes you enough already."

"Dislike him?" Lemholtz muttered, exhausted by his fruitless struggle. "Dislike him? . . I hate him, that's what I do . . . He'd *better* be careful . . . I'll get him yet!"

CHAPTER XXXV

I

THE PLAN of factory representation was working out so well that Richard almost dreaded to accept congratulations for fear that something unforeseen might happen to prove his structure only a house of cards. It was not perfect by any means. Every day showed some change necessary to hold the scheme true to the basic principles upon which it stood; but the foundation still seemed unassailable, and that gave Richard confidence. The men at once recognized the spirit of fair play and were convinced that they would receive a square deal, with nothing counting but the facts.

"It is always a case of cards down face up," one of the workers explained. "Nothing is hidden, and we all know what the other fellow knows."

The prompt establishment of this confidence nullified the opposition of the union heads, who saw their prestige wane as the management and the workers became educated to each other's point of view. There could be little talk of collective bargaining when every question of joint interest became co-operative and the subject of mutual deliberation. The men frankly liked

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it. They had come to see that the union kept all its men on a dead level while the new system gave the opportunity for any one to rise above it who possessed more than average ability. They retained their membership cards, for the union found no vulnerable point at which to strike. Certain it was that the new spirit of co-operation and fair play worked to smooth out situations which under old methods would have resulted in serious trouble.

Tony Lemholtz was a case in point. He had been a trouble-maker from the time he entered the plant; yet not even James Norton dared to discharge him because of his power as a labor leader. Now, when he transgressed the rules of his department, the foreman fearlessly exercised his prerogative. Lemholtz demanded justice, and was tried before a tribunal made up equally of representatives from the management and those duly elected by the workers. The foreman became the plaintiff, and witnesses were called on both sides. With all the evidence before them, the Shop Committee unanimously sustained the action of the foreman, and, being unanimous, the incident was closed. Had there been only a majority-ruling against him, Lemholtz might have appealed, but as it stood even the General Manager would hesitate to reinstate him.

Richard reviewed the case with considerable satisfaction as he continued his walk after depositing the unwilling burden at his lodgings. He had been confident that the foreman would be upheld, yet the case had been a real test of the strength of the new system. There could be no failure, he was sure, so long as the manage-

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ment maintained their faith in the workers, for it was human nature that the men should share the same reaction.

II

Richard had still further basis for confidence. In another fortnight a new administration would be inaugurated at Washington . . . a new President, who had already indicated by his utterances and by the men selected to be his advisors that he recognized the magnitude of his task, and the presumption of any mortal to appropriate to himself omnipotence. It was too soon to judge except by the calibre of the outstanding figures, but Richard felt in his heart an abiding faith that party politics would now give way to the humanitarian demands created by the war; that the academic atmosphere in the White House would become charged with the vitality of constructive action; that his country, for which he fought, would regain the prestige won by the spontaneous response of its people, and lost by the supine misrepresentation of its government. Barry's words came back to him . . . "We mustn't lose faith in our country . . . the trouble isn't with our country, is it, Capt'n?" Richard held his head erect for the first time since he returned home . . . No, thank God! the trouble is not with our country!

III

Lola came to the plant the following day with her father. She was sure that Richard would seek Olga at the first opportunity, and concluded that the interview

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must have taken place. She was so fearful of the effect on both that she could not wait for Richard to come to her. Mr. Stewart's conference with him gave her the opportunity to relieve her anxiety, and she knew her presence would be no embarrassment.

"I've just been over the figures for the last period," Stewart remarked when they were seated in Richard's office. "You ought to feel well satisfied with the results."

"I do," was the frank acknowledgement. "That we are getting increased production is beyond question. But what I am most pleased with is the fact that we all are becoming educated. Never before did we know so well the actual conditions in the plant, never before have the workers so well understood our problems. Previously we could make mistakes and get away with them; now if we are unjust, or use poor judgment, we are shown up without mercy. On the other hand, no operative can give less than a fair day's work for a fair day's pay without having the fact so apparent that he is ashamed of it."

"I believe even your father would be convinced if he could see things now."

"I know he would," Richard declared decisively. "All father wanted was results, but because he had always secured them in one particular way he couldn't accept any other method. I give him credit for much of this success. It would be unbelievable that, after giving his entire personality to this concern for so many years, he could be disassociated by anything so incidental as death. This will always be James Norton's business;

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all we are doing is adding modern improvements to a structure already built on a rock."

"I am glad to hear you speak like that," Stewart replied soberly. "My friendship with your father extended over so many years that to have had a break come at the end is still a real sorrow. I would like to believe with you that he knows now that our difference was only that of method. When one reaches my age friendships become sacred."

"You may believe it . . . surely," Richard declared with emphasis; "and I look upon my friendship with you as another legacy from him. It will mean much to me to have you think of it as a continuation of the old."

Richard felt Mr. Stewart's smile to be a benediction.

"I shall so consider it," the older man replied, . . . "until I have the right to give you that deeper affection to which a son is entitled."

"I hope that time may not be far distant," Richard exclaimed, holding out his hand impulsively. "Lola knows how much that hope means to me; she also knows that there still remains one obstacle to overcome. We are working on that now."

"I don't mean to interfere," Stewart apologized. "You young people have fully demonstrated your ability to look after your own affairs . . . Lola came to-day to see some of the changes I told her had been made in the plant."

"Let me show them to you both a little later."

"I have some letters to dictate," Stewart continued. "Lola and I will be waiting in my office when you are ready."

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"Can you spare her for a few moments?" Richard asked.

"Willingly . . . to you," the older man answered as he rose and left them to themselves.

IV

"You have seen her?" Lola asked eagerly as the door closed.

Richard drew a chair beside hers.

"I have surely made a mess of things," he replied bluntly. "While I have been analyzing this problem of industrial relations, I have completely overlooked a greater human problem under my very eyes. By my inconsistency I have proved my right to be classed among the so-called reformers! Unless we can straighten this out in fairness to Olga, I shall be a failure after all."

"We can always make our sacrifice, Dick," Lola said seriously, but her voice broke as she spoke.

"We can't even do that," he corrected her. "Olga has seen the situation from the beginning far more clearly than we have. She saw through my conceited platitude that my work was the greatest thing on earth. She knew that my love for you was bigger than anything else in my life even when I questioned it myself, and she has never doubted that it would assert itself when I finally came to my senses."

"But she loves you, Dick."

"The more blame to me . . . I have offered to marry her, Lola. I felt it to be my duty. I tried to conceal the fact that there can be no one in my heart but you.

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She will have none of it. Hers is a big nature, and its strength appals me. It is Olga who dominates the situation today, and in the end we must do as she insists."

"We can't accept our happiness at her expense, Dick."

"What can we do?" he asked helplessly.

"Is she in the works now?"

"I suppose she is in her department. We can see as we go through the plant."

"Get her up to the house tonight, Dick, and we three will talk things over."

"Very well," he assented . . . "Shall we start now? Your father must be ready by this time."

V

Stewart had explained to Lola the physical changes which had been made in the works as part of the new scheme. Every machine was now located so that the light fell upon the work from the proper angle; the sequence of the machines was arranged to conform with the natural order of the processes; everything was so planned as to eliminate waste energy and to preserve the comfort and well-being of the workers.

"I feel every throb of this machinery," Richard remarked as the three walked through the various departments. "Think of the power which lies behind it! I am always impressed that it is trying to convey a message which I can't understand because I am ignorant of its language."

"I should say that its song now was 'Good Will in Industry,'" Stewart suggested.

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"Listen," Lola added, . . . "All have a chance, all have a chance,' . . . that's what it is saying!"

"Whatever it is," Richard continued, "it does seem to have a kindlier tone now than formerly; still, I dread it. There is something so inexorable about it. Properly controlled, it serves mankind, but we can take no liberties with it. Its power seems lurking behind each throb, jealously watching every human action, and ready to punish the foolhardy mortal who dares to match his strength against it . . . This is the department where Olga works, Lola . . . There she is . . . over there at her machine."

As the girl saw them approaching she gave them a brave smile, but continued with her work. Richard signaled to stop the machine.

"Will you come up to the house this evening?" Lola asked her quietly.

"Please, Olga," Richard added as he saw her hesitate.

"Yes," she said, evidently with an effort; "I will come."

VI

As Richard turned, a wild-eyed figure suddenly stood in front of him, rising out of nowhere. Before he realized it, Tony Lemholtz, maddened beyond reason by the continuation of his drunken orgy, was upon him.

"Now I've got you, *Mister* Richard Norton," he snarled, his face twitching with demoniacal fury. "You are bigger than I am, and you are strong enough to truss me up on your shoulder like a pig, as you did last night, but here's a little argument which makes us even."

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As he spoke he threw himself at Richard with a knife gleaming in his hand, but before the blow reached its objective a slight form intervened, and Olga's back received the slender blade. As she slipped to the ground, Lemholtz dropped the knife, and ran to escape the angry cries of pursuing workmen.

"Get the nurse . . . quick!" Richard cried.

Then, seeing that he could do nothing beyond what Lola had already done for the still figure in her arms, he joined in the pursuit.

In and out among the machinery ran the fleeing man, sobered by the excitement, yet none too steady on his feet. As he turned a corner, he came face to face with another infuriated group, and in dodging them plunged headlong into a mass of belting which controlled a battery of machines. With a shriek of agonized fear, Lemholtz was seized by the slow but endless movement of the giant octopus, and carried toward the wheels, which awaited their victim.

"For God's sake shut off the power!" Richard ordered.

Then he started to climb up the frame.

"You'll be killed, sir!"

One of the workmen tried to restrain him.

"Leave me alone!" he shouted. "If I can reach him, I can hold him back from the wheels."

Rapidly but cautiously picking his way, Richard reached a point where he could seize Tony's foot, and by bracing himself, he held him there until the throbbing of the machinery became less and less, and reluctantly the great giant relinquished its prey. Lemholtz

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was lifted none too gently to the floor by his former shopmates, who relented when they saw his condition. Then, as by a common impulse, the men turned to Richard with a mighty cheer.

VII

Richard's thoughts were all of Olga. When he returned, the nurse had staunched the flow of blood, but they dared not move her until the doctor arrived.

"How serious is it?" he demanded.

"I can't tell," the nurse admitted. "It all depends upon what the knife reached."

"Suppose you take a look at that man there, if you can be spared now."

When she returned a few moments later, Richard awaited her report.

"Compound fracture in both arms, sir. He'll be lucky if he saves either one."

Richard shrugged his shoulders.

"I had better have left him to his fate."

CHAPTER XXXVI

I

OLGA kept her appointment with Lola and Richard, but not as had been expected. She was tenderly conveyed to the Stewart house as soon as Dr. Thurber completed his examination and declared the wound not mortal, and there Lola and Richard watched by her bedside until she regained consciousness. When she opened her eyes that same accusing smile which penetrated Richard's heart seemed to rest upon her lips.

"Am I going to die?" she inquired simply.

"No, dear," Lola answered her; "you are going to live . . . that we may show how much we all love you."

An expression of disappointment passed over Olga's face.

"I am sorry," she said quietly. "To have given my life for Richard would have made it worth while after all."

"It has been worth while in more ways than you will ever know," he replied with much feeling.

Dr. Thurber's entrance interrupted their conversation. With him was the great surgeon Barry had been rushed to bring from the metropolis for consultation.

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The doctor's face lighted as he saw the patient's condition.

"Well," he exclaimed to Olga . . . "here we all are again! The last time, we had this young man in bed and you anxiously watching over him; now the positions are reversed!"

"I am glad," she said, smiling weakly. "It is my turn to take his place."

"She is much brighter, doctor," Mrs. Stewart said hopefully. "That is a good sign, isn't it?"

"Of course," he replied encouragingly. "Dr. Lamson and I will know all about it now in a few moments."

The moments seemed lengthened into hours to the Stewarts and Richard who waited below in the library for the surgeon's report. What the nurse had said made them anxious, but in the joy of again hearing Olga's voice their apprehensions were temporarily forgotten. When steps were heard descending the stairs every eye turned toward the door in breathless tension.

It was a moment which comes daily to every doctor, . . . mercifully with sufficient rarity to the individual to have it epoch-making. Its dramatic value is no less than that of the jury's foreman when he pronounces the verdict of life or death, freedom or a life-long incarceration, simply because it is rendered in the privacy of a home rather than in the glare of the courtroom. Dr. Thurber tried to mitigate the force of the announcement by an attempt to smile, but the surgeon, with only a professional duty to perform, came directly to the point.

"She will never walk again," he declared bluntly.

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"The wound has produced paralysis from the hips down.

Without further comment the surgeon turned into the hall, and Dr. Thurber saw him to the door.

Barry, standing in the hallway, with his hands behind him, had an expression on his face which caused Richard to reassure him.

"She is badly injured, Barry, but she will live."

"I sure thank the good Lord!" was the heartfelt response.

Then Barry handed Richard a magnificent rose from the conservatory which he had kept concealed.

"Please give that to her yourself, Capt'n. Tell her it's from me, and ask her to notice particular how beautiful a flower is when its petals aren't bruised."

Left to themselves the little group glanced helplessly each at the other, tears forcing themselves into the eyes of all. Richard was the first to speak.

"This is what she did for me!" he said brokenly.

"For us, dear," Lola corrected, with equal emotion. "This makes her forever a part of our lives."

"Unselfishness, sacrifice, service, love, . . the apotheosis of our creed," he added; "a living expression of all we have tried to put into words."

II

Richard stepped back into the hall to meet Dr. Thurber as he returned from the front door.

"How much do you care to tell me to explain this mystery?" the doctor asked abruptly.

"What mystery?"

"The interest you all have in this factory-girl. First

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I find her with you in a flat down near the plant, living as Mr. and Mrs. Richards. Then she calls me to the jail on your account, and for the first time I discover your identity. Now I find her accepted in this household as a member of the family. I confess that my human curiosity makes me guilty of transgressing professional etiquette."

"Your question is a natural one," Richard admitted soberly; "and there are others who are entitled to hear my answer. Come with me."

When they were again in the library, Richard took Lola's hand in his, and repeated the doctor's question. Stewart showed instant resentment, but Richard's lifted hand caused him to refrain from what he would have said.

"What Dr. Thurber has asked requires an answer," Richard declared. "Lola has never raised the question, and never would. Unless it were asked, perhaps I should never have referred to it myself, but it is better for you all to know the exact facts. Circumstances brought this wounded girl and me closely together, . . . more closely than convention would permit. She found me unconscious upon the floor of my chamber. She summoned the doctor. Fearful lest she lose the opportunity to nurse me, she let him think that we were man and wife. In France, during the 'war, nothing was thought of such companionship; at home, in peace, such a relation can have but one interpretation, . . . such is the degree of perfection civilization has attained beyond the barbarism of war! If Dr. Thurber's question involved me alone, I would tell him to think what

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he likes and be damned; for the only one concerned knows the answer before it is given. Since it affects the honor of that wonderful little girl upstairs, I will tell him that there are men and women in the world who are able to rise above the physical, to whom conventions represent limitations, and who have creeds and ideals of their own which to them are more sacred than the platitudinous hypocrisies amongst which they live."

"I apologize, . . . I'm sure," Dr. Thurber stammered; "I only asked . . ."

"You only asked what the world would ask," Richard interrupted; "you are merely its mouthpiece, and my answer is not to you personally, but to the world. I had hoped that one of the great results of this war would be the emancipation of the sexes. Over there, men and women served and lived as friends, as pals, as comrades, and they learned the happiness which comes from this natural companionship. Here it is tabooed. Men must herd with men and women with women. For a man to be intimate with a woman labels her as his wife or brands her as his mistress. I'll admit that I can't force the world to my viewpoint, but I'm not sorry to have proved to myself that the relation which the good Lord intended to have exist between men and women is not impossible in practice. The present incident is closed. One of the chief joys to which Lola and I look forward in our married life is the companionship of this wonderful woman, no longer a factory-girl, no longer, thank God! subject to the slanderous tongues of busy-bodies, but an integral part of our lives, which her presence will make richer and more beautiful."

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"I am glad I asked the question," Dr. Thurber declared frankly, "for otherwise I should not have had your answer. One of the compensations of a professional man's life is that he comes face to face with men and women who, under stress of feeling, disclose their real human selves. My question was brutal, but the genuine admiration I feel for my patient, whom I have seen under curiously varied circumstances, impelled me to seek an explanation. You have given it to me, and I thank you for it."

"It is a different world we are living in today from that in which you and I were brought up," Mrs. Stewart remarked, as the situation was improved by the doctor's response. "It has taken me a long time to get used to it, but somehow I am inclined to think the change a healthy one, after all."

"Why shouldn't the final education of parents rest in the hands of their children?" Stewart demanded, trying to relieve the tension. "After inflicting ourselves on them for a generation, why shouldn't they have a chance to retaliate? It certainly comes under the head of poetic justice."

"Or retribution," Lola laughed, delighted to have the conversation take a lighter turn.

"Well," Dr. Thurber exclaimed, "if I am forgiven I will return to my patient."

"Does she know . . . what we know?" Lola inquired anxiously.

The doctor shook his head.

"It would not be safe," he explained. "She has always seemed the embodiment of action, and now . . ."

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"Tell her that she shall be our daughter . . . to live with us always, for Lola will soon be flying the old nest," Mrs. Stewart said feelingly, and her husband silently nodded his approval.

"You always think of the right thing, dear," Lola cried, embracing her mother affectionately. Then she turned to the doctor.

"You don't realize the fearlessness of her spirit," she added. "She would far rather know the truth, and she will meet it unflinchingly."

"At the right time, but that won't make it any easier for me. I shot a doe once, up in the Maine woods. She accepted her fate, but her eyes haunt me still . . . You all may follow me, say in five minutes, but you must only stay with her for a moment."

III

In due time, obedient to instructions, the family followed him to the sick chamber. The doctor's face expressed an overpowering sympathy, but on Olga's features rested a new light, startling to those who had before associated it only with that exaltation which so frequently precedes death. Lola and Richard went directly to the bedside, while the others drew back, realizing that this moment was not theirs.

"The doctor has told you . . ." Richard asked haltingly.

"Not what I most wished to hear," she answered.

"And that is . . ." Lola interrogated.

Olga held out both hands, one to each, and with theirs tightly grasped within her own she looked from

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one to the other with a smile so tender that Richard no longer felt its accusation. She put her question to Lola.

"Will you marry my Richard now . . . very soon?"

"Let us speak of you, dear," Lola protested; but the girl did not heed her.

"Will you marry my Miss Lola now . . . very soon?" she demanded of Richard.

"Lola is right," he declared, . . "it is you of whom we are thinking now, not of ourselves."

"You will be thinking of me if you do as I ask. It is the only thing which will make me happy."

"The doctor has told you of our plans for you?" Lola asked.

"Yes; is it all true? Is it possible that I can still be a part of your lives and that I shall not be a burden to you?"

"Oh, Olga," Lola cried, "except for that there can be no joy for any of us."

The invalid closed her eyes for a moment, as if the light was too brilliant for their strength. When she opened them a new expression possessed her, . . a return of the old roguish animation.

"You have had to take us both after all!" she said shyly to Richard.

"Am I not a lucky man?"

Then she turned to Lola.

"May I kiss *our* Richard?"

As he bent over her she became serious again. The great brown eyes looked full into his as if to convey a message of unusual import, but the words she spoke were for the others.

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"A kiss is wine sipped by two friends from the same glass . . ."

Olga motioned Lola to approach nearer the bed, and placing her hand with Richard's, joined them together in her own.

"But love is the crucible which remains forever after the wine is gone!"

